

Dudley

CHRONICLE



Thursday, January 19, 2017

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BRING MUSEUM BACK INTO USE

Report by Judith Hawkins

DUDLEY'S former museum building must be brought back into use as soon as possible, council bosses say.

Councils insisted the historic building in the town centre, which controversially closed its doors just before Christmas after more than 100 years, should not be left empty for any longer than necessary.

It has also been revealed that collections from the St James's Road museum and art gallery, which have been moved to the Dudley Archives in Tipton Road, will be back on display by August. This is so the award-winning new venue will be ready to accommodate school trips from September.

The council decided to close the museum in order to make savings of around £150,000, concluding that it was no longer fit for purpose. A report ahead of a meeting of Dudley Council's overview and scrutiny management board today (Thursday) reveals the building is intended for staff training and conferences. This currently takes place at Saltwells

Education Development Centre, Bowring Green Road, Netherton, which is being considered as a potential site for housing.

The packing up of exhibits at Dudley Museum is expected to take three months.

Collection

The report also reveals plans for the Brooke Robinson collection of artwork and artefacts donated by the former MP, to be displayed on the ground floor of the existing museum building in the town centre.

The report to the board calls for "the relocation to be co-ordinated to ensure that the vacated building is brought back into active use without unnecessary delay and as soon as reasonably practicable".

It adds: "The necessary refurbishment works should be undertaken as soon as practicable."

Councillor Khurshid Ahmed, cabinet member for planning and economic development, said: "These plans will ensure it still has an important role."

An open afternoon is taking place at Dudley Archives on Tuesday, from 2 to 4pm, where visitors can give their views.

It has been revealed that part of the Duncan Edwards football memorabilia collection, which had been housed at the museum for the past decade, will be loaned back to Dudley by the collection's prospective new owners Manchester United.



The former museum

YOW GORRA LOFF – COMEDY NIGHTS BACK AT LAMP



Pub landlord Tom Comyns and comedian Wayne Beese getting ready for the monthly Loffs at The Lamp comedy nights

A COMEDIAN is hoping to bring the loffs back to a Black Country pub.

The Lamp Tavern, Dudley, which was given the best comedy club in the Midlands title in 2010, will begin hosting comedy nights again.

Dudley comic Wayne Beese is aiming to put the pub back in the spotlight by running monthly Loffs at The Lamp events.

The pub, on High Street, once hosted the likes of top comedians Reginald D Hunter, Tim Vine and Rhod Gilbert.

Wayne, who is a reporter at the Shropshire Star, said: "I began gigging as a comedian in

the middle of 2013 and I did a spot at Stourbridge Town Hall. A few months later, my wife phoned me at work to say a bloke had knocked on the door looking for me. It turned out he'd been in the front row at the town hall and wanted to know if I would go and do a surprise 10 minute slot for his mate's 50th birthday at The Lamp Tavern."

"I went and did it and immediately fell in love with the room there. Ever since I've thought about putting comedy on at The Lamp and now I've decided to go ahead and give it a crack."

The 36-year-old former Dudley Chronicle reporter added: "Live comedy works best in small, intimate rooms. The Brewhouse at The Lamp is a great room."

The father-of-two said: "I will host the shows as resident compere and introduce acts hand-picked by myself who I have seen on the circuit and really rate."

The nights will be held on the last Friday of the month, starting with a triple bill on February 24 featuring Rob Deering, Nick Page and Daliso Chaponda, all for £10. Tickets are available from www.skiddle.com/e/12881718.

TRIBUTE

'King of Rock' Ted Gray dies aged 81

THE man known as the 'King of Rock' has died after six decades at the helm of a famous Black Country sweet firm.

Ted Gray, who ran Edward Gray's of Dudley with his sister Betty, was 81. He had worked at the factory, started by his grandfather in 1826, since he was 15 and continued into his 70s.

His daughter Julie Healy, 53, said: "He was very proud of the business, especially the herbal tablets. Only certain family members know the recipe. He mixed the ingredients himself to keep it secret. He was a very generous man and loved his job."

COURT

Inquest opens on mother's death

AN inquest has opened on a woman allegedly killed by her son.

Hazel Jennings, aged 76, died in Russells Hall Hospital on January 20, 2016. Her son Mark Jennings, aged 39, of Sorrel Walk, Brierley Hill, is facing one count of manslaughter and his trial is set to take start at Wolverhampton Crown Court on July 10.

She was allegedly pushed to the floor, fracturing her hip. Cause of death given was pneumonia and the inquest was suspended due to the court case.

ACCIDENT

Fatal crash as car and lorry in collision

A MAN from Dudley died after his car was involved in a collision with a lorry.

The 40-year-old died at the scene of the crash on the A361 near Ashby St Ledgers, between Kilsby and Daventry, on Saturday morning.

He was travelling in his silver BMW estate towards Daventry when it was in collision with a red Iveco lorry travelling in the opposite direction at about 10.20am.

An air ambulance, road crew and first responder attended, along with fire crews from Daventry, Merewy and Rugby. Northamptonshire Police had not named the victim and is appealing for witnesses.

INSIDE

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Victim, 82, died before blaze broke out

A LOVING grandmother had already died before a fire started in her house due to a dropped cigarette, an inquest heard.

The blaze broke out on the ground floor of Edith Williams' home in Catesby Drive, Kingswinford, just after 11.15pm on November 14.

Black Country Coroners Court heard how neighbours were alerted to the fire after hearing the smoke alarm go off and seeing flames from the downstairs window.

They tried to douse the flames through the window by using bowls

of water before emergency services arrived. Firefighters discovered 82-year-old Mrs Williams in her armchair.

The hearing was told that the former bakery assistant had limited mobility and had suffered ill health since 2010.

A fire investigation report into the incident detailed that it was believed she had died prior to the fire from a 'natural event'.

Her son Tim Williams, from Wall Heath, described the incident as being 'their worst fear'. He said:

'She had limited mobility and had lived with me and my brother before moving back home three years ago.'

'She was a heavy smoker and would sleep in her armchair and have carers come in to visit. We even had webcams set up so that we could check that she was alright.'

'I saw her on the night and left about 9pm. Her last words to my wife were "where are my cigarettes?" We locked the door and she always kept the window open so we would put the keys back through.'

'It was our worst fear that she

would fall asleep and drop a cigarette.'

A statement from fire officer Lee Scott-Richards said: 'She was sat back into the armchair with evidence of burns to her clothes but there was no evidence that she was aware of the fire or had tried to make an escape or put it out. Therefore it seemed that the death occurred before the fire was established.'

The cause of death given was ischemic heart disease and senior coroner Zafar Siddique gave a conclusion of death by natural causes.

Speeding motorists clocked by action group

MOTORISTS were caught speeding every 90 seconds during a 60-minute speedwatch along a residential road.

Members of the Northway Action Group for Road Safety (NAG4RS) say they have captured 48 vehicles exceeding the 30mph speed limit during the study along Northway, Sedgley, on November 24.

It was the latest speedwatch conducted by NAG4RS who have been campaigning to improve road safety on the Northway since April 2015.

An island was installed along the road following a successful campaign by the group to quell speeding.

But group spokesman Tony North felt that speeding was still an issue.

He said talks were on going between campaigners and Dudley Council to look at further safety measures that could be added, including a pedestrian crossing.

Mr North said: 'We had a mini-island installed along the road outside the shopping precinct, but that was not the measure we really wanted.'

'We asked for a lights-controlled pedestrian crossing, which is something we still are asking the council to look at.'

Monitored

The speedwatch took place between 2.30pm and 3.30pm where campaigners monitored vehicles travelling from the Wolverhampton Road along a 400-metre stretch.

Following their hour-long study, the highest speed a vehicle was caught travelling at was 49mph.

The speedwatch produced similar results to one conducted in 2015, when 42 drivers were caught travelling over the speed limit by NAG4RS on the same stretch of road.

The campaigners say they have received support from Dudley North MP Ian Austin and Councillor Keiran Casey.

Dudley Council asked campaigners to continue monitoring the speed of vehicles along the road to help deliver data which could aid potential safety measures in the future.

A report by NAG4RS was handed into the authority just over a year ago identifying 'five zones' that needed action.

Arson suspected after cannabis find



The aftermath of the suspected arson attack which happened at a house in Brierley Hill Picture: @FireBrierley

A FIRE at a house in Brierley Hill was believed to have been started after West Midlands Police found a cannabis factory in the property, the force says.

Two people at a neighbouring property on Wells Road had to be taken to hospital for a check-up after the fire on Sunday morning.

West Midlands Fire Service said the fire was 'suspected arson', and now West Midlands Police has said they believe the fire to be linked to drugs.

"It is believed a small fire was lit in the living room following an earlier discovery of a cannabis factory by police. The fire caused severe damage to the property as well as a neighbouring house."

"The fire is being treated as arson and investigations continue."

Three crews from West Midlands

Fire Service were called to the address on Wells Road.

Two people living next door were taken to Russells Hall Hospital for check-ups after inhaling smoke.

West Midlands Fire Service later confirmed the fire was 'suspected arson'.

Firefighters found the fire in the ground floor living room of the two-storey home. Crews from Brierley Hill, Stourbridge and Haden Cross shut the utilities off in the home.

Teen shop assistant's gift swindle discovered

A SHOP assistant swindled her employers out of thousands of pounds with a gift card refund scam.

Heerah Shahid, a 19-year-old university student, carried out the con over seven months while working at the Mothercare store at Merry Hill shopping centre. She used the gift cards to buy more than £1,000 worth of goods from the firm's website which she had delivered to her home in Gammage Street, Dudley.

But her scam fell apart when she attempted to record a 'refund' for four pushchairs, worth nearly £4,000, and the transaction was picked up by Mothercare's fraud detection team.

Shahid appeared before magistrates in Walsall, where she pleaded guilty to two counts of fraud by abuse of position. She will be sentenced at Wolverhampton Crown Court on February 9.

Ms Linda Gudgeon, prosecuting, said Shahid credited 15 gift cards with varying amounts of money, recording them as customer refunds from January last year. She used them to buy products from the firm's website in her own name and were sent to her home. In July she began putting money, recorded as refunds, directly into her account. Ms Gudgeon, said the total amount of the direct transfers attempted was £4,644.73.

Mr Sam Christopher, defending, said the second-year biochemistry student, who lives with her parents, had no previous convictions. Shahid was granted unconditional bail ahead of the sentence hearing next month.

GP's surgery remains closed

THE future of a doctor's surgery which has been closed for more than six months is still unknown.

The Coombeswood Surgery, in Hale-sown, closed in May due to a dispute between the tenant GP and the landlord over missed rent payments.

It was the first kind of closure of its kind in England.

Despite the legal dispute being settled the surgery remains closed due to a hold-up with cleaning the building.

NHS bosses had promised patients the re-opening date would be October 17.

Caroline Brunt, chief nurse at Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group, said: 'The CCG have continued to work closely with the practice management to progress plans for re-opening the surgery.'

Nude pub calendar boost for charity

PUB regulars have raised £2,600 for the Teenage Cancer Trust after they bared all for a calendar.

Customers at The Cottage Spring, in Brook Street, Woodsetton, joined landlady Shelly Price in posing naked.

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Holocaust survivor at memorial ceremony

A MAN who lived through the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust will be visiting Dudley to speak at the borough's annual memorial event.

Henri Obstfeld was born in Amsterdam, Holland, in April 1940, and some two years later occupying Nazi troops began rounding up Jews.

Henri was saved by a Dutch couple who took him in as their 'nephew'.

The memorial event in Dudley is organised each year by Dudley North MP Ian Austin and Dudley College Students' Union.

Last year, hundreds of people heard Holocaust survivor Susan Pollack describe her horrendous experiences in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

The commemoration is open to the public and will take place at the Broadway campus of Dudley College on Friday, January 27, from 12.30pm until 2pm. It has been organised with the support of the Holocaust Educational Trust.

Students from Bishop Milner Catholic College and King Edward VI Sixth Form College, who visited Auschwitz as part of the trust's Lessons from Auschwitz programme, will also be speaking at the special commemoration.

It will conclude with the ceremonial lighting of a candle of remembrance as the Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Mohammed Hanif, leads faith leaders in a minute's silence to honour the victims of The Holocaust. Mr Austin added: "It's always a very moving and dignified event."

Filming to start on Peaky Blinders

THE creator of Peaky Blinders has given an update on series four and said filming was set to start soon.

The 1920s gangster drama set in Birmingham, which is partly filmed at the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley, will begin filming in spring.

Birmingham-born screenwriter and director Steven Knight, whose latest drama Taboo is currently being screened on BBC1, said scripts have recently been finalised for the next series, following last year's cliffhanger that saw most of the Shelby clan sent to prison.

Starring Cillian Murphy and Tom Hardy, Peaky Blinders has become an international hit, with particular success in America, and inspired a fashion craze for 1920s haircuts and caps.

Elderly woman in serious condition

AN elderly woman remained in a serious condition in hospital in Birmingham, as The Chronicle went to Press, after being knocked down by a car in Colley Lane, Cradley Heath, on Wednesday morning (January 11).

Readers owe libraries over £31k in fines

MORE than £31,000 is owed in fines across libraries in Dudley, it has been revealed.

A Freedom of Information request shows that 5,482 customer tickets have fines attached in the borough.

Fines for overdue books have a maximum charge of £3, with 18 to 59-year-olds paying 15p per day in fines. But readers aged over 60 or below 17 years of age do not face a charge if their books are overdue.

A senior opposition councillor says that the authority is failing to collect outstanding fines and hard-pressed

borough services are suffering as a result.

Leader of the Conservative group at Labour-run Dudley Council, Councillor Patrick Harley said: "This is a big figure and shows that there are clearly problems going on in the council as they can't seem to do the basics – such as collecting library fines.

Basic

"Collecting outstanding fines is a basic thing for a local authority to be doing, but they don't seem to be getting it right."

"No wonder they have problems and are continuing to cut front line services – they're not doing what they're supposed to do, which is to collect fines. That money could go towards some of the services which they have now cut."

In July the council announced that library opening hours were due to be slashed to save money.

The libraries began their shorter opening periods last August, to help cut costs and reacting to falling usage.

Councillor Rachel Harris, cabinet member responsible for libraries,

said: "Clearly if people owe money in library fines it would be helpful if they paid them and I would ask people to settle any money owed with us."

"While we make efforts to contact people over fines, including writing to them, we must balance the cost of chasing small debts with the money that we will eventually recoup."

She added: "Although fines are a small percentage of the overall budget, they would be helpful in continuing to fund the service, although they are not factored into the budget setting for libraries."

NEWS IN BRIEF

By-election date after resignation

VOTERS in a Dudley ward will head to the polls next month for a by-election following the resignation of a councillor.

A seat in St Thomas' ward is vacant after Labour's Councillor Glenis Simms stepped down earlier this month, citing personal reasons.

The by-election will be held on Thursday, February 16.

Dudley Council chief executive Sarah Norman said: "I would urge people to make sure they are registered to vote." Polls will open at 7am and close at 10pm.

Care company is to create 30 jobs

A BLACK Country firm which provides care in homes has announced it is creating up to 30 jobs.

Home Instead Senior Care offers support to people in their homes across Dudley and Sandwell.

A range of full-time and part-time roles are being created. Applicants do not require previous experience in the care sector.

The company says among the areas carers are needed are Princes End, Rowley Regis, Sedgley, Gornal, Pensnett, and Blackheath. Call Home Instead on (01384) 259723.

New council tests for taxi drivers

PASSENGERS in Dudley can feel safer when they ride in a local taxi cab thanks to a new driving test for taxi drivers.

Dudley Council has announced it will run the driving tests for all new taxi drivers to replace the former DVSA assessment tests, which used to be compulsory for new taxi drivers. The test fee is £79.66, which is the same as the former DVSA price. Anyone who registers as a new taxi driver in Dudley will need to pass the test.

Bolshoi on big screen live from Moscow

SHOWCASE Cinemas is bringing the Bolshoi Ballet's stunning production of The Sleeping Beauty to screens in Dudley and Walsall.

Ballet fans will have the rare opportunity to watch the world renowned company stream live from Moscow on Sunday.

The production features a classic score by Tchaikovsky with choreography by Yuri Grigorovich. The ballet will be screened at 3pm. For tickets visit www.showcasecinemas.co.uk

Water main burst

A BURST water main caused traffic chaos on a main commuter route in Dudley on Friday. South Staffs Water engineers were called to Himley Road and the repair was carried out the same day, along with work to repair the road surface. A spokesman said sorry for any inconvenience.

Inspectors rate primary school as 'inadequate'

A SCHOOL in Dudley has been put in special measures after an emergency Ofsted inspection.

Priory Primary School, which has 637 pupils, has been criticised by the education watchdog and rated 'inadequate' in all areas.

Following a complaint, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector ruled that an inspection should take place. The school, which caters for three to 11-year-olds, was visited by inspectors on November 22.

Safeguarding across the whole school has been rated 'ineffective', with concerns raised by inspectors about staff failing to follow advice from Dudley Council's children's safeguarding board when they are alerted to a concern about a pupil.

According to the report, staff said they regularly carried out risk assessments but inspectors found they were not clear about what they check to ensure children are always safe.

Inspectors said: "Reception children picked up two large crates, pushed a child into the middle and refused to let the child free. An adult stood nearby and did nothing."

Pushing

Youngsters in Reception class were also observed running and intentionally pushing one another in unsupervised areas.

Development in the Reception year was described in the report as below national average.

The report states: "The most able pupils are often provided with easy work. The activities for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities range from being too complex to too simplistic."

Funding for pupils was described as 'not spent well'. According to the report, in the last financial year more than £100,000 additional funding was paid to support disadvantaged pupils but the youngsters had 'not benefited'.

In 2014 the school was rated 'good' by Ofsted after pulling out of the special measures it was placed into during 2012.

Headteacher Jill Craig said: "Working with the local authority we are putting steps in place to address the findings of the inspectors, in particular in relation to record keeping and up-to-date training around safeguarding and raising levels of progress for all pupils across the school. The education of our children is the utmost priority and our work now is to make those recommended changes."

Woman's mission to halt ivory trade



Ellen Cobb, aged 22, from Stourbridge has launched an online petition to outlaw the ivory trade in the UK

A YOUNG woman from Stourbridge is leading the fight to bring in a total ban of ivory sales in the UK number that will mean the issue goes to Parliament for a debate.

Affairs announced a sales ban on ivory younger than 70 years old.

Miss Cobb, of Beale Street, feels passionately about African elephants that are poached in large numbers for their ivory tusks, which are later carved into ornaments and jewellery.

In September last year the Government took action which fell short of a total ban when Andrea Leadsom, then Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural

Affairs, announced a sales ban on ivory younger than 70 years old.

When the petition reaches 100,000 signatures, the issue will be discussed by MPs again. Miss Cobb says that elephants are still being slaughtered in huge numbers and, while the international trade is illegal, legal domestic trade means illicit ivory being passed off as antique and therefore legitimate. See www.petition.parliament.uk/petitions/165905

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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



A READER tells me he saw his doctor last week. This week he received an email from a funeral-insurance company. Just keep telling yourself it's pure coincidence.

AFTER my recent piece on police being unwilling to carry guns, a retired cop recalls that, although he never wanted a pistol, he found himself with one during a raid. It had fallen out of another officer's holster.

ANOTHER ex-cop tells me the prospect of arming some bobbies chills his blood. He says: "Some of the younger bobbies on my old shift were so gung-ho they would have shot each other before they had got out of the parade-room door. Interestingly, the officers really opposed to being armed were ex-soldiers."

A TEAM of blacked-up Morris dancers started their show in Birmingham and were heckled and abused and forced to clear off. Well, what did they expect? The Alvechurch Morris men claim to be following an old tradition of dancers blackening their faces so as not to be recognised by their employers. Bunkum. This practice was confined to small parts of Wales, centuries ago. Why has it become so popular with Morris sides all over England, especially one like the Alvechurch team which was founded less than 30 years ago? Look at old photos of Morris sides and you'll find virtually all the faces are white. Blacking-up is not some revered old tradition but a modern choice, and in the middle of multicultural Brum a very silly choice.



OH, dear. It's been another terrible week for those people variously described as Breximans or Remoaners. They deserve a new name, something to capture their growing acceptance of Brexit, coupled with undying dismay. I toyed with Les Misérables but that's far too European. So instead, let us call them the Glums. Having spent months warning darkly that new trade agreements could take a decade, the Glums watched in horror as Boris Johnson met the Trump team and sewed up some sort of understanding with the Yanks over coffee. Okay, it's not a proper trade agreement but as we are gradually discovering, you do not need a trade agreement in order to agree to trade.

FOR amateur weather forecasters, this is a significant time of year. According to the Dial of Daies published in 1590, each of the first 12 days of January predicts the weather for the year to come. The afternoon of January 8, for example, indicates the weather for June. And today's weather is a sort of summary for 2017's weather overall. Do not throw away ye olde sea-weed.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Man charged over FA Cup match flare

A MAN has been charged with throwing a missile onto the pitch during Stourbridge FC's cup game against Wycombe Wanderers.

Daniel David Ingram, aged 28, of Birmingham Road, Kidderminster, was arrested at the game on January 7 at Wycombe's Adams Park. He was bailed by Thames Valley Police to appear at High Wycombe Magistrates Court on January 30.

It comes as the Football Association has confirmed it is looking into the incident at the match, which had to be stopped for a period around the half-hour mark when a flare was thrown onto pitch.

The object started spewing orange smoke after being thrown from the stands during the FA Cup third round tie, which the Black Country side lost 2-1.

The Glassboys were already facing an FA charge after a flare was thrown onto the pitch in their previous FA Cup match against Northampton Town, which prompted a plea from chairman Andy Pountney to fans not to repeat the offence.

A spokesman for the FA said: "I can confirm the FA are aware of what happened. The referee reported it after the game."



The flare halted action in the cup game

Motorist in court after fatal car crash

A MAN has denied causing the death of a teenage mother through dangerous driving in an early hours crash.

Nadine Foster, aged 18, was a passenger in a Ford Focus when it crashed into a wall on Hagley Road, Oldswinford, on April 16 last year at around 2.20am.

She was taken to hospital but died a few days later.

Joseph Chance, aged 24, from Murcroft Road, Stourbridge, appeared at Wolverhampton Crown Court on Friday where he pleaded not guilty to causing her death by driving a Renault Clio dangerously.

He also pleaded not guilty to causing death by dangerous driving while uninsured and unlicensed.

The defendant did admit dangerous driving and having neither insurance nor licence.

Remanded

He was remanded on bail to stand trial on the death by dangerous driving charge later in the year.

The case is currently due to be tried at Wolverhampton Crown Court in October but will be moved to an earlier date if one becomes available.

A statement released by the family at the time of Miss Foster's death said: "We are devastated to have lost our beautiful Nadine. She was a loving mother, daughter and grand-daughter. She was a happy, smiley girl and the light of our lives. Nadine will be missed every day. Her loss has left a void that will never be filled."

Uprooted tenants are given priority

ALMOST 200 people forced to leave blocks of flats in Netherton will be given priority for council housing in the area.

A total of 192 residents are being uprooted from Arley Court, Compton Court, Manor Court and Wells Court, off St John's Street, after a controversial plan to demolish them was passed.

Council bosses have pledged that the affected residents will be first in line for any suitable properties that become available. Some tenants have already left, while the rest will have to move out by the end of this year.

Dudley Council has sped up the process of moving everybody out, due to concerns over the state of the buildings.

Councillor Qadar Zada said: "The flats are not fit for purpose."

It's vintage style and sounds at centre fair

A VINTAGE craft and vinyl records fair will be held in Stourbridge.

The event is at Ruskin Glass Centre in Wollaston Road, Amblecote, on Sunday, February 5.

It runs from 11am to 4pm with admission £1.

Bucket-loads of fun for panto stars



Aladdin stars Lucy Kay and Joe McElderry lend a hand during giraffe feeding time at Dudley Zoo Photo: @wolvesgrand

STARS of this year's pantomime at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre enjoyed a day trip to Dudley Zoo

Aladdin stars Joe McElderry and Lucy Kay paid a visit to the Castle Hill attraction where they got up close with the creatures.

The singers can be seen with giraffes, lemurs and other animals in pictures posted on social media.

Lucy, 27, wrote on Twitter after the day trip: 'Cute morning at @Dudleyzoo !! Thank you so much for having us! It was an amazing experience.' Her fellow panto star Joe – a former winner of TV's The X Factor – posted on Instagram: 'Wonderful morning!! thankyou for inviting us down! I didn't quite master the Lemur feeding though!'

Pantomime tickets can be bought online at grandtheatre.co.uk, from the box office in Lichfield Street in person or by calling 01902 429212.

Aladdin closes later this month and has been hailed 'a roaring success' – with upwards of 60,000 expected to have seen the production by the time it finishes this weekend. 2009 winner of The X Factor Joe McElderry plays Aladdin and 2014 Britain's Got Talent finalist Lucy Kay plays Princess Jasmine.

The panto, which ends its long run with a final performance on Sunday, also stars Lisa Riley from Loose Women, CBeebies' Ben Faulks and local internet sensation Doreen Tipton as played by Walsall actress Gill Jordan.

Pantomime tickets can be bought online at grandtheatre.co.uk, from the box office in Lichfield Street in person or by calling 01902 429212.

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New archives building has won a major design award

A PURPOSE-BUILT centre that houses Dudley borough's archive collection has won national recognition for its 'excellent' design and build.

Dudley Council's archives and local history centre has been awarded the 'excellent' status by the Building Research Establishment under their assessment scheme. The scheme assesses a building's sustainability, as well as its design and construction.

The archives centre includes a number of sustainable features including solar panels and responsibly sourced materials. A natural landscaped area was also created at the rear of the building to enhance the existing ecology in the area and the long term biodiversity of the site.

Councillor Khurshid Ahmed, cabinet member for regeneration and enterprise, said: "When drawing up plans for the new centre, we recognised the importance of creating a strong and sustainable building that would stand the test of time and create an environment that people enjoy visiting and researching local history."

"Three years after its completion the building continues to evolve as later this year it will house our museum collections."

"It's fantastic news to receive this national recognition from the Building Research Establishment. It recognises our success and is a credit to all involved in its development."

The centre opened to the public in early 2014 on Tipton Road, close to the Black Country Living Museum.

Former councillor has denied charge

A FORMER Dudley councillor has appeared in court accused of taking indecent photographs of a child.

Ex-Wardsley councillor Derrick Hemingsley, aged 56, has been charged with taking 90 pictures of the child. It allegedly happened between August 6, 2013, and November 7, 2015.

Hemingsley, of Penzer Street, Kingswinford, appeared before magistrates in Walsall on Thursday, where he indicated he would plead not guilty to the charge. He will next appear at Wolverhampton Crown Court on February 9.

He was granted bail on the condition he has no contact with children aged under 16 and no contact with the victim, or the victim's family.

Tab move venue for next show

TAB Operatic Society, which usually performs in Brierley Hill, is staging its next show, the comedy Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, at Stourbridge Town Hall, from March 27 to April 1. Call 07722 417962 for details.

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Immigration answers needed, says MP



Dudley North Labour MP Ian Austin

DUDLEY North MP Ian Austin has urged Jeremy Corbyn to 'start coming up with fair and reasonable answers' over immigration after the Labour leader refused to rule out keeping freedom of movement.

The MP said it was time for Labour to listen to the views of people outside Westminster and come up with a coherent strategy on immigration. Labour has come under fire for failing to have a clear policy on the issue, with deputy leader Tom Watson admitting the party's message was unclear.

Labour MP Mr Austin has advo-

cated 'fair controls' on freedom of movement from the EU among a number of measures, including a clampdown on migrants claiming benefits and using the NHS without having paid taxes.

Politicians

He said: "Whether politicians in London like it or not, people are concerned about immigration."

"They have got to start listening to people in places such as the Black Country and acting on those views. We need fair and reasonable answers

to people's questions on immigration."

In a speech earlier this week Mr Corbyn had been expected to announce that changes were needed to curb uncontrolled immigration, but instead he said he 'doesn't rule out' keeping freedom of movement.

Wolverhampton North East MP Emma Reynolds and her Labour colleague Stephen Kinnock proposed a two-tier system, skilled and unskilled, on immigration. They argued that the Brexit vote shows the public want to see change on immigration.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Regular check-up for zoo chairlift

DUDLEY Zoo's popular chairlift is currently grounded as it undergoes its yearly safety check.

As part of the annual MOT, all 41 numbered chairs have been removed for inspection by independent assessors.

Site service manager Malcolm Clements said: "We have to remove all the chairs and then a number of them are randomly chosen to be fully inspected and X-rayed to ensure they're fit to run for another 12 months."

It is hoped the chairlift will be back in action for the Easter holidays.

Two injured in a three-car smash

TWO people were hurt in crash in Lower Gornal that involved three vehicles.

The collision happened on Dibdale Road, in Milking Bank, at 2.20pm on January 11.

A man and a woman suffered minor injuries and they were treated at the scene by ambulance crews. They did not require hospital treatment.

Eight firefighters attended the collision scene.

The road was blocked while they were treated and the vehicles and debris were removed.

False alarm at shopping centre

THE Merry Hill shopping centre was evacuated of hundreds of shoppers last week but it was due to a 'false alarm', say the centre's bosses into.

Shoppers took to social media to express their concerns after being evacuated and refused re-entry on January 11, saying they had been outside for around 20 minutes before being let back into the malls.

Centre bosses tweeted: "We were asked to evacuate, but we've now been reassured that it was a false alarm."

Sight loss advice is offered in village

THE Beacon Centre for the Blind will be running an outreach service for people living with sight loss in the Kinver area.

The service will be held at Kinver Community Library on February 2.

Beacon Centre staff will run the session to provide advice and support between 10am and noon.

The outreach session will then run at the same time on the first Thursday of each month at the village venue.

Bird watcher gives talk

THE editor of Bird Watching Magazine is to give a talk in Stourbridge.

Author Matt Merritt will be talking about his book A Sky Full of Birds and his travels around the UK at Stourbridge Library on March 1. Tickets cost £3 for 6.30pm talk and can be booked on (01384) 812945.

Police hunt three men after robbery on bus

CCTV images have been released of three suspects said to have been involved in robbing an autistic man on board a Black Country bus.

The victim was assaulted on the number 74 bus between Dudley and Great Bridge. Police have now released images of three suspects who are said to have attacked the man then threatened him with a knife. The attack happened at around 4.15pm on Saturday, November 12, when the 22-year-old victim boarded the bus in Castle Street, just outside Dudley Zoo and went to sit upstairs.

He was approached by the men and assaulted – they then made off with his cap and tried to steal his phone.

Officers said the victim was threatened with a knife as he tried to get away and was followed downstairs to the lower deck.

Sickening

He managed to leave the bus outside Pure Gym Tipton/Dudley Port. Details of the attack have only just been released as police hunt for the attackers.

Dudley Council's UKIP group leader Paul Brothwood labelled the attackers' behaviour 'sickening' and urged any witnesses to get in touch with police.

He said: "This is horrid behaviour, it's a sad reflection on them as individuals.

"It's absolutely shocking, vile – but sadly the way society is going you do hear of awful incidents like this, targeting vulnerable people.

"It's sickening. It's important for anyone who may have witnessed it to come forward to get justice for this person."

"Anyone who knows anything needs to get in touch with police as soon as possible."

A post on West Midlands Police's Facebook page about the incident has been shared hundreds of times.

Anyone with information about the incident has been urged to call Pc Drew Turner on 101 ext 851 3126.



Man involved

Know him?

Third suspect

Mayor's awards for unsung heroes



Awards night – Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Mohammed Hanif and his wife, Mayoress Zabeda Khanam VOLUNTEERS and community stalwarts are in line to be recognised with awards from the Mayor of Dudley.

People are being urged to nominate unsung heroes from the world of sport, art, community, education, business and environment as part of the Mayor's Ball and Civic Awards.

These include the Duncan Edwards award for sport, sponsored by Nordic Timber Buildings; Cedric Hardwicke award for arts, sponsored by GMB Union, Frank Foley award for community spirit, sponsored by Cushillo Personnel; Thomas Attwood award for education, sponsored by The School Travel Company; Mike Holder award for business sponsored by Dudley College and William Shenshaw award for the environment, sponsored by Jessup Brothers.

People can nominate online at www.mayorofdudley.org.uk/civicawards or can pick up a form from libraries and leisure centres.

Foley award for community spirit, sponsored by Cushillo Personnel; Thomas Attwood award for education, sponsored by The School Travel Company; Mike Holder award for business sponsored by Dudley College and William Shenshaw award for the environment, sponsored by Jessup Brothers.

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with Mark Andrews

NHS: We need to be more realistic

SOME years ago a man came into our office with a complaint about the charity then known as Age Concern.

He was furious that somebody from the charity who was supposed to have planned his door had not shown up.

"Why do you always ask people for their age?" asked our receptionist when he had gone. I suggested that maybe a fit, healthy man in his mid-50s possibly could do his own DIY.

Which brings me to the "humanitarian crisis" which is supposed to be engulfing the NHS at the moment.

There are no easy answers. We have a growing and ageing population and more costly procedures and drugs than ever before, not helped by profiteering drug companies.

And while there are plenty of people who say it is all down to funding, these people tend to have a stock reply when asked how much extra tax they are prepared to pay.

Nothing. It should be somebody else who pays for it.

Then there are the vast swathes of the population who take the attitude that if a service is free to use, they might as well use it.

We've all met them. They take a fortnight off work every time they sneeze. They call their GP when they get indigestion. And rock up at A & E every time they get a headache. And shout a lot when they don't get immediate attention.

A bit like middle-aged men who think a charity for the elderly should do their home improvements.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has come in for a lot of stick for suggesting the four-hour waiting targets should only apply to people with urgent conditions, but I tend to think it is a fair point.

If people expect Bupa standards of healthcare, we are going to have to start paying Bupa prices. All of us. Otherwise, we are going to need a mature debate about what we can reasonably expect from the NHS.

And it might mean that while priority is given to those with genuine life-threatening conditions, those with conditions that can wait will have to do just that. Wait.

□ □ □

A LOT has been made of the number of celebrity deaths over recent months, but none has made me sadder than that of former Villa, Wolves and England manager Graham Taylor.

Maybe it's because football is a bigger part of my life than film, television or music.

But maybe it is because the loss of the bright young manager who arrived at Villa Park in 1987 reminds us of our own mortality.

Either way, he will be greatly missed.



Bank clerk Tanya Nelson weighing out coins in 1983



Batches of coins being moved at the Royal Mint in 1983

Why pound in pocket is all about to change

Our new £1 won't just look very different, its value is nothing like it was years ago, as Mark Andrews reports

HAD a look at your change lately? Noticed how many shiny new £1 coins have been issued over the past few months?

Well don't get too attached to them. By October they will cease to be legal tender.

A new, 12-sided £1 coin – designed by Walsall teenager David Pearce – will enter circulation on March 28, and by October 15 the familiar round pound will be no more. Given that there are thought to be 1.5 billion of these coins in circulation, it is going to be a very big operation.

When the pound coin was introduced on April 21, 1983, the response was muted to say the least. Just 10 months earlier, the 20p piece had been introduced, with many consumers, particularly the older generation, complaining that it was too small – smaller than the 2p, 5p or 10p coins of the day, for example.

Inflation

So when the long established £1 note was replaced by a metal coin after more than a decade of heavy inflation, it was perhaps little surprise that consumers felt it reflected the decline in the pound's worth.

Back in 1967, when prime minister Harold Wilson famously assured us that the pound in our pockets had not been devalued, a £1 note would have bought a discounted winter coat in the sale at Shrewsbury's ABC Warehouse. Or failing that, it would be enough to pay for 10 loaves of bread, or six pints of beer in a pub.

But by the time the pound coin arrived in 1983, it did not go so far – enough to buy a single pint of Carling Black Label, or five pints of milk.

Today, it will typically buy two pints of milk, or a single loaf of bread. But forget a trip to your local – a typical pint is now nearer £4.

As far back as 1980, the Royal Mint ob-



Walsall youngster David Pearce whose design was chosen from 6,000 competition entries

The reasons for switching from the note to the coin were logical enough.

In 1983, a paper £1 note had an average lifespan of just nine months, whereas it was estimated that the new coins would last at least 40 years. The number of early £1 coins still in circulation is testament to their durability.

Unsurprisingly, the vending trade was very supportive of the move, too, as it allowed machines to be adapted to accept larger amounts of money. The launch of the new coin also coincided with the growth of pay-and-display car parking machines.

Given the pound's origins, it is perhaps not surprising that some people felt the small coin had cheapened its value. The oldest currency in the world, the pound took its name from its weight in silver during Norman times – 240 old silver pennies weighed one pound. No

wonder people thought they were being short-changed. The reverse designs of the £1 coin represented the UK and its four constituent parts – Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England and the first series of designs took floral emblems as its theme.

Resistance to the coins turned out to be comparatively short-lived, and the last pound notes were phased out in 1988. Besides, there was far more to complain about in 1990, with the introduction of the new smaller £5 notes and 5p coins. But while the pound coin has largely been accepted by the general public, it has given birth to another problem. Forgery.

From the start, the £1 coin has been forged on a prolific scale. Ironically, one of the reasons the coins proved so popular with forgers was the ease of disposing of them in vending machines.

Surveys by the Royal Mint have estimated that up to three in every 100 £1 coins are fakes, and this has been a major driver in the redesign. David Gauke, chief secretary to the Treasury, has pledged that the new £1 coin will be harder to forge than ever before.

Lighter

The new coin will be made from two metals, with a gold-coloured outer ring and a silver-coloured inner ring. It has an image that changes from a '£' symbol to the number '1' when the coin is seen from different angles. It also has very small lettering on both sides of the coin and milled edges. It is thinner and lighter than the round pound, but its diameter is slightly larger.

While the existing pound coin has changed little since 1983, people's spending habits have, with greater use of plastic and the internet.

According to figures from the Payments Council, cold hard cash accounted for 86 per cent of payments in the UK in the mid-1980s, but by 2011 this had dropped to 55 per cent. The decline in cash usage has coincided with the rise in automated payments such as direct debits and standing orders.

Debit cards made up almost one fifth of payments by 2011, but they made none when the £1 coin was first introduced because the debit card was not brought in until 1987.

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Trump will be a breath of fresh air

FOR some little while now I have been of the thought that Theresa May doesn't seemly have the stature or strength of character to grasp the nettle and explain to the electorate which direction she intends adopt before triggering Article 50 in March.

The resignation of the UK's top EU diplomat, Sir Ivan Rogers, would appear to have thrown a spanner in the works. I hadn't heard of him before, I doubt if many have, but he is a civil servant who has previously expressed negative views on Brexit, yet remained in post at the top table at the EU.

And how was it that, barely 24 hours before his resignation became known, MPs were lauding his negotiating skills and his vast knowledge of the EU. Then next day brickbats were levelled at him from the disaffected. Why not? British politics stinks of hypocrisy.

I have never been overly impressed with American politics but when Donald Trump chose to throw his cap into the arena for President that aroused interest. Considered by the world to be a no-hoper, the American public proved otherwise. Combative, abrasive and

somewhat politically naive, he is all of those things, but the American public have warmed to his directness and have been energised with his promises of making America great again.

He is shortly to enter the White House as the next President of the United States of America. He may turn out to be a good or brilliant one, or perhaps an abject failure. Whichever, it will be an interesting ride for America and the world - and with is a breath of fresh air.

JOHN B WALDRON
Stourbridge

No super hospital solution

SO hospitals are finding that they are unable to cope. Is this any wonder when successive Governments are hell bent on building 'super hospitals' with smaller capacities than the hospitals being replaced?

We are constantly being told of our ageing and increasing population but this seems to be ignored at every stage.

Who are these 'super hospitals' for? To me they seem like ego trips for the architects and those in power who are commissioning the building of these hospitals with little thought of whether the hospitals are able to cope or are user friendly.

We read that already there is doubt about the new Midland Metropolitan Hospital being big enough. Perhaps it's about time that those spending our money should talk to the staff and service users before making these decisions?

LEN HALES
Cradley Heath

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

EMAIL

dudley.chrons@
expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Leisure centre is key to community life

HALESOWEN Leisure Centre is a social hub for the community. There are clubs that meet there regularly, including Cobra Running and Triathlon Club, Birmingham and Halesowen Shotokan Karate Club, Footwork Dance Academy, Halesowen Swimming Club, Black Country Divers, Nautilus Divers, Stourbridge Swimming Club, Swim-for-it Club.

There are also fitness classes throughout the week. Because of their popularity, some classes are repeated throughout the week, organised by Halesowen Leisure Centre. Of course, there is also swimming available for the general public, schools, children's parties, referrals from health professionals and for one-to-one and group swimming lessons. Table tennis, squash and the gym are all also available. I apologise if I have missed out any clubs or classes. I hope this makes clear to councillors that Halesowen Leisure Centre - and I'm certain that Stourbridge and Dudley's centre are just the same - is absolutely key to the fabric of the local community and its quality of life. This is why people are vehemently opposed to the Labour council's proposals.

C STOLL
Halesowen

Politicians to blame for crisis

I ADDRESS my letter to all the politicians who have only just realised that there is a crisis in our hospitals.

I must point out this is not just a winter crisis this as been going on ALL year for a few years now caused entirely by the penny-pinching politicians, who decided it would be a good idea to close a vast number of care homes.

They now are saying the problem in our hospitals is caused by our ageing population blocking beds, but these patients are medically fit to go home but not physically fit, so where can they go?

I must also point out our elderly people have paid and continue to pay their taxes, so instead of blaming the easy target I suggest you start earning your wages.

Our doctors and nurses do a tremendous job and I give a very big 'thank you' to them all.

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Kingswinford

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Showtime with Pete and band

Wordsley M TG

CHAIRMAN for the day Wendy Lloyd welcomed members and friends to a 'Christmas Showtime' introducing Pete Boddis and his band.

A most enjoyable morning was spent listening to Pete and his band of four musicians at the December meeting. A Christmas theme ran through the music with well known old and seasonal songs with the audience singing along. There was light-hearted banter and reminiscences by members of the band which made the event very entertaining. Wendy thanked the band for a good variety of music and song.

The February 6 lunch outing will be at The Bell, Kingswinford, noon for 12.30pm.

Treasurer Rosemary Skidmore encouraged members to attend the specially arranged Comic Relief coffee morning and sales tables on Monday January 23 at Wordsley Green Community Centre from 10am.

The next guild meeting on February 20 will be for membership renewal when subscriptions will be paid and on March 20 the Annual General Meeting will be followed by a quiz.

The April meeting, at Wordsley Green Community Centre, will be on the 18th (Tuesday), not the day before as that is Easter Monday. The speaker will be Derek Walker who will demonstrate the arranging and planting of hanging baskets. Guild monthly coffee mornings will resume during February.

Get on the move
to start new year

Wordsley Gentle Exercise Group

Members enjoy a splendid buffet

Cleent Gardening Club

THE November meeting saw around 40 members enjoy the annual members' supper when a splendid buffet was enjoyed by all, fortified by the occasional glass of wine.

The supper was followed by entertainment provided by local entertainer Elspeth Sullivans from Bromsgrove.

Elspeth provided a selection of songs and medleys and feet were soon tapping in rhythm with the music and various members were singing along in unison.

A very convivial evening concluded when the chairman wished everyone a happy Christmas and prosperous new year and reminded members that, there being no December meeting, the next gathering of the club would be the Annual General Meeting on Friday January 27.

All are welcome at the group's meetings which are held at Cleent Village Hall on the fourth Friday each month.

Anyone interested in either joining or just visiting the club can get further details by visiting the website at <https://cleentgardenclub.wordpress.com/> or by contacting the chairman Martin Grange on either 01562 883009 or 07917 184762.

For more details, call 01384 288219.

THE new year report for the Wordsley Gentle Exercise Group recorded an excellent year for 2016.

In March a number of members attended the Kingswinford and Stourbridge Lions Club annual concert at the Civic Hall, Brierley Hill.

May was the group's seventh birthday, celebrated with an afternoon cream tea party during social time following the exercises. A number of members attended the Community Association's 75th birthday celebrations at the Richardson Hall in June. In August the group said goodbye to Chris Williams, a loyal and dedicated caretaker of the Richardson Hall for many years, with a celebratory party and presentation.

November saw Wordsley Community Association's Christmas fair at the community centre and a record amount was raised towards the venue's upkeep. The Mount Pleasant, Kingswinford was the venue for the Christmas meal.

The very popular and friendly group meets every Friday, from 1.30 to 2.30pm, at the Richardson Hall, Lawnswood Road with varied exercises to music.

Tea/coffee and biscuits (or cakes!) are available for a social half hour to round off the afternoon. Each session costs just £2 with an annual membership of £2 due each March. Visitors are very welcome to come along and try out an afternoon.

For more details, call 01384 288219.

Samples go down a treat

Grange E Guild

CHRIS Holton presided over the November meeting at Grange Court Stourbridge. She gave a warm welcome to all present.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read, approved and signed as a true record.

Treasurer Jill Attwood gave an up-to-date financial report, while Marlene O'Hanlon informed members that she had a full diary of speakers for 2017.

Guest speakers were two representatives

from Waitrose in Stourbridge who displayed a wide selection of cheese and wine that members could sample. This went down very well. Chris gave the vote of thanks on members' behalf.

Refreshments were served by committee members and helpers and the raffle was drawn with three lucky winners.

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France honours Black Country war heroes



Kingswinford veteran Edward Billingham (right) and Leonard Freeman, of Walsall, both age 91, with their medals

TWO Black Country D-Day veterans have been awarded France's highest military honour. Edward Billingham, from Kingswinford, and Leonard Freeman, from Short Heath, both aged 91, were presented with Légion d'honneur medals for the part they played liberating Nazi-occupied France.

The men received their medals from Walsall Mayor Councillor Kath Phillips at Walsall Town Hall.

Mr Billingham served on the warship HMS Mauritius from 1943 to 1946, including during the D-Day landings. He was also awarded the Russian Millennium Medal in 2015 for serving on the convoys that supplied Russia.

Council pays out £8m mileage

CASH-STRAPPED Dudley Council has paid out more than £8 million in mileage costs to staff over the past five years – 10p more per mile than the recommended amount.

Last year alone the council could have paid out around £200,000 more than it needed to.

The authority has been paying its workers 55p per mile, even though the mileage payment suggested by the Government's Revenue and Customs department is just 45p per mile.

Between January and December last year, the council paid over £1.2m in mileage expenses, although if it had stuck to the recommended rate that bill could have instead been £981,800.

The rate is 55p per mile for the first 8,500 miles and 13.7p per mile there-

after. If all the claims last year were at the 55p rate the council would have paid out an extra £218,200.

The figures follow the council's plans to raise council tax by nearly four per cent, which hopes to raise an additional £4m a year.

Councillor John Martin said: "We've scrapped user allowances, including those for bosses, and introduced a single mileage rate for all claims for essential work related travel."

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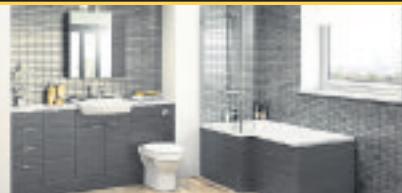




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Beacon boss is ready to brave Siberia for charity

A CHIEF executive from the Beacon Charity for the Blind is to tackle a Siberian 'ice' race in temperatures reaching -27c.

Arwyn Jones will face fierce winds, snow and ice during the treacherous challenge as he aims to raise £10,000.

The half marathon across the frozen surface also takes runners along the world's largest and deepest lake in Siberia.

Mr Jones, who has been at the helm of the Beacon Centre in Dudley for the past four years, has volunteered to run in the annual Lake Baikal event as a sighted guide for Paul Nichol, who is blind.

The two runners first met last summer at a conference where Mr Nichol was speaking.

During the talk he mentioned he was on the look-out for someone to act as a sighted guide in the event. Mr Jones promptly signed up and is now running 20k a week on top of up to three hours gym work to prepare for the challenge on March 7.

Gruelling

The challenge is considered one of the most gruelling running events in the world and it is thought that Mr Jones and Mr Nichol could be the first blind runner and guide to take it on.

Mr Jones said: "As soon as I heard about what Paul was planning I knew I wanted to sign up. He is inspirational and a great example of how living with sight loss doesn't have to hold you back. He regularly runs and has even climbed Mount Kilimanjaro since completely losing his sight almost 20 years ago. Given the conditions, we are aiming to run the half marathon in three hours or less and, in doing so, probably complete one of the most



Beacon Centre chief executive Arwyn Jones is to take on a challenge in Siberia

memorable experiences in our lives, all while raising money for our respective good causes."

The Beacon Centre supports people living with sight loss across Wolverhampton, Dudley and the wider Black Country including South Staffordshire through sponsorship. Mr Jones'

fundraising drive will support the 2017 Beacon Butler Golf Competition, which gives people with sight loss the chance to try golf.

It will also help fund a new video and audio tutorial service.

To make a donation visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/arwyn-jones4



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Acenta moves forward with £23m financing

STEEL processing firm Acenta, which has two major sites in the Black Country, is set for continued growth after sealing a £23m refinancing deal with HSBC.

Acenta Steel is one of the UK's leading processor and distributor of hot rolled and bright engineering steel bars and is working with HSBC and HSBC Global Receivables Finance.

HSBC's refinancing package will allow Acenta to continue to offer its portfolio of highly differentiated products for a range of sectors, including the hydraulics and automotive sectors.

The £60m-turnover business operates from six UK sites, including Willenhall and Dudley, and exports over 40 per cent of its steel to global partners.

The refinance will allow Acenta to

continue to invest in stock and capital to maintain its position as the number one processor of bright bar in the UK and to provide one of the broadest product ranges of engineering bar in Europe.

Bright bar precision finished metal for component manufacture in wide ranging and demanding engineering applications such as engine, driveline and suspension parts, hydraulic valves and household goods.

In addition to processing steel, Acenta says it has a unique vertically integrated supply chain providing stock-holding, cutting and distribution facilities from the UK. The business aims to build on exports to Mexico, Eastern Europe and Asia.

Acenta also has operations in Rugby, Manchester, Newport, Sunderland, and Southampton.



Acenta Steel grows – Graham Hay of HSBC, Tarlok Singh and Colin Mills of Acenta, and Gary Riley of HSBC

Number of attacks on fire crews has risen

ATTACKS on firefighters in the line of duty are on the up, according to new figures.

In the last four years, a total of 309 firefighters in the West Midlands have been subjected to assaults.

From April 2015 to April 2016 there were 67 assaults but this increased to 77 in just eight months, from April to December.

Verbal assaults have dominated the incidents, with a total of 50 such incidents reported in April to December last year, an increase from 43 in the previous year.

The throwing of missiles also featured with 12 such attacks reported in those eight months, an increase of four from 2015/16.

Physical assaults were listed third in the figures, with five reported from April to December 2016, an increase from the one that took place in 2015/16.

There were also four instances of threatening behaviour reported, as well as three recorded cases of harassment.

Nuisance

A statement from the West Midlands Fire Service on the findings said: "Attacks can be verbal or physical, and might include hindrance or nuisance while firefighters are responding to and resolving incidents. When an attack is reported, it is referred to a station commander to consider and act on as needed."

"Any attack upon our firefighters is one too many, and will not be tolerated. Where appropriate, we will work closely with West Midlands Police to bring culprits to justice."

"All of our fire stations put great effort into building

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Museum seeks more business partners

THE Black Country Living Museum is seeking to add new members to its Business Partner scheme.

The museum in Tipton Road, Dudley, has a number of opportunities for business partners including entertaining clients, increasing brand awareness and staging special events.

Partners can also hire rooms at the museum and also get involved in sponsorship and get staff involved in volunteering.

To find out more about becoming one of the Black Country Living Museum's partners, or to discuss a bespoke package or sponsorship, e-mail development@bclm.com or call 0121 557 9643.

Zoo wins award for 15th year straight

DUDLEY Zoo has been awarded a national award for quality – for the fifteenth consecutive year.

The Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme award is issued by Visit England and follows a secret visit by the tourism industry regulatory body, who praised zoo staff for their enthusiasm and friendliness.

Zoo director Derek Grove said: "We're a totally unique tourist attraction and we're delighted with the report which provides an unbiased viewpoint of the visitor experience we provide."

The report complimented staff for their efficiency, knowledge, customer care and appearance as well as highlighting the zoo's car park and entrance, safari shop, well-maintained grounds, vast range of animals and our new exhibits.

He added: "We had a very busy 12 months and have continued to invest in the 40-acre site."

"Our staff have worked incredibly hard to achieve a huge amount of growth and progress, helping us achieve a 30-year high of 310,000 visitors being welcomed to the zoo."



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Self-service ticket extension

BRAND new self-service ticket machines have been unveiled at train stations across the Midlands.

A total of 28 new machines have been installed across the London Midland network in Shropshire, Staffordshire, the Black Country, Birmingham, Worcestershire and Warwickshire.

It aims to make rail travel easier as part of a £15 million ongoing programme of investment in technology.

The machines have been set up at several stations including Dudley Port and Birmingham's Adderley Park, Duddeston, Gravelly Hill, Perry Barr, Small Heath, Stechford, Tyseley and Witton.

The machines feature contactless technology to speed up the process of buying a ticket and also offer options to reach any destination in the UK. They can also be used to collect tickets ordered online via London Midland's click and collect system as soon as 15 minutes after ordering.

UKIP spokesman in call to put Crown mark back on glasses

CALLS have been made for the return of traditional Crown stamps on Britain's pint glasses – a decade after they began to disappear in favour of an EU-wide 'European Conformity' mark.

UKIP's Bill Etheridge, who represents the West Midlands in the European Parliament, believes a move back to the UK Government stamp, guaranteeing full and half-pint glasses are the correct size, could help revive Britain's glass-making sector.

An EU Measuring Instruments Di-

rective, which came into force in late 2006, meant manufacturers had to mark the letters 'CE' on newly-made pint pots, although existing Crown-stamped glasses could still be used in pubs.

Demands for the return of the Crown stamp follow similar calls for post-Brexit Britain to allow traders to ditch metric measures.

Control

Mr Etheridge, UKIP's defence spokesman and a member of the Campaign for Real Ale, said: "All drinkers remember the Crown mark, knowing it guaranteed them a full pint. Rein-

roduced gradually, as replacements, they are not a throwback to a nostalgic era, but a move to put us back in control of the production and specifications of our own pint."

Mr Etheridge, who is also a Dudley councillor for Sedgley, added: "Across the whole range of manufacturing we have to look at returning to our own systems of British Standards as we unravel ourselves from EU red tape. Any nostalgia should be to return to an era when British Standards set the agenda and were respected throughout the world. Once we are free to make our own trade deals again, they will be at the forefront of our sales pitch."



Bill Etheridge - British stamp

Fine to fund air ambulance

A NEW air ambulance will be taking to the region's skies following a £1 million grant.

Midlands Air Ambulance, based at RAF Cosford, will order the new craft after it was announced in the autumn statement that the charity would be given the money by the Government from the banking fines fund.

Hanna Sebright, chief executive for Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, said: "The injection of funds via the banking fine comes as very welcome news at the charity as it will help further enhance our vitally important emergency service."

"The allocation has enabled us to place an order for an upgraded H145 helicopter, which will cost in total approximately £7 million."

The charity currently owns one helicopter and leases two further aircraft.

Cinderella panto is given modern twist



Prince Charming (Dan Wright) and Cinderella (Megan Luckins) with fellow cast members

IT will be a case of whose foot will fit the glass slipper when a fairytale pantomime hits Brierley Hill Civic Hall.

Cinderella will be given a modern twist as Brierley Hill Musical Theatre Company put on the performances this weekend. Jo Gresswell, production director, said: "It'll be a spectacular show with a mixture of veterans and new people. The music will be very pop orientated too featuring Justin Timberlake's Can't Stop the Feeling and Jess Glynne's Hold My Hand. It's very family friendly."

"There are 40 people in the group and we perform throughout the year. In April, we do a charity concert that raises money for Action Heart and the Lifeboat Association. Many of our members turn up and audition and then join the cast full time. It's wonderful to see them progress through the different shows and being something special to each performance."

The show will continue from tonight (Thursday) to Saturday. Tickets cost £10 with concessions available. See www.bhmtc.co.uk or call the box office on 0845 6588095.

New £6m football pitches proposed

FOOTBALL pitches could be created at two sites in Sandwell after council bosses revealed a plan to bid for millions of pounds of sports funding.

Sandwell Council wants to build 'football hubs' equipped with high-grade facilities in the north and south of the borough. The Parklife Football Hub programme, which is backed by Sport England, the Football Association and Premier League, aims to boost sport participation and improve facilities at grassroots level.

The cash-strapped authority would be able to apply for up to £6 million in funding for the hubs, which would include at least two 3G pitches and changing rooms.

Locations for the pitches have not yet been decided but it is planned for one to serve Tipton, Wednesbury and West Bromwich and the other for Oldbury, Smethwick and Rowley Regis. The move would involve the formation of a new trust.

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Buyout set to enable growth

ONE of Europe's leading manufacturers of precision-pressed products, Kingswinford-based Clamason Industries, is set to boost its capacity for growth through management buyout.

The buyout is backed by Connection Capital, a specialist private client investment business.

Connection Capital clients invested £5.4 million to acquire a majority stake in Clamason, which makes a diverse range of high spec parts and bespoke components for the medical, power, consumer goods and automotive sectors from its sites in Kingswinford and Slovakia.

It employs more than 200 people in total and has a turnover of around £20m.

The company supplies Delphi, Bosch, Visteon, Sanofi, Schneider Electric and Siemens.

Staff to help blind charity

STAFF at a garden centre are to support the Beacon Centre for the Blind during the year.

Ashwood Nurseries, near Kingswinford, is backing the Sedgley charity.

Money raised by the Ashwood Lower Lane centre will go to the charity's Independent Living Centre.

It will hold open days at owner John Massey's John's Garden and Hellobore Tours during the year.

Boy named teddy after donor who saved his life

A nine-year-old boy from Kingswinford met the mother of the young man who enabled him to have a life-changing liver transplant.

Kristof Polgar, was born with a genetic condition called Progressive Familial Intrahepatitis Cholangitis (PFIC) that caused his liver to fail. When he was just three years old, he received part of Justin Charman's liver in an op at Birmingham Children's Hospital.

Not only did the transplant give Kristof the gift of life, it saw him go from strength to strength at sport and he now a junior star of the British Transplant Games, winning a staggering eight medals for his performance in the racket sports section over three years.

Justin Charman was aged just 21 when he took his own life in February 2011. Justin was an award-winning aircraft engineer apprentice in Somerset and had been receiving therapy. When he died, Justin's organs were given to five people, including Kristof.

Mother

Now, Kristof has met the mother of his life-saver, Angela Land, aged 52, who lives in Bath. They met at Westonbirt Arboretum near Gloucester.

Kristof's mother, Erica, said: "Kristof was born with his liver problem. He couldn't even walk because he was so weak. So he learned to walk after his transplant. We wanted to meet with Justin's mother to thank her. We spent the day together. It was quite emotional. Kristof asked what Justin's favourite colour was and discovered it was blue, the same as his."

Speaking of how the transplant made a difference to his life, Erika said: "After the transplant, Kristof became strong, he started to walk in just a few weeks after the transplant."

Kristof decided to name his teddy bear after Justin so he can cuddle him.

Angela said: "Nothing will bring my son back but it does bring comfort to know that he has helped many people, including Kristof."

To join the NHS Organ Donor Register visit www.organdonation.nhs.uk or call 0300 123 2323.

By Jessica Labhart

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To join the NHS Organ Donor Register visit www.organdonation.nhs.uk or call 0300 123 2323.



Angela Land and Kristof Polgar – emotional meeting



Angela's son Justin was an award-winning engineer



Transplant Games winner Kristof Polgar with mother Erika

Furniture firm takes on workers

A FURNITURE manufacturer based in Kingswinford is stepping up recruitment and production.

Ultra Furniture on Pensnett Trading Estate, Kingswinford, was bought by NVM Private Equity's Helium Miracle 124 holding company in October.

Managing director Glenn Aston said that the new owners were right behind Ultra, which was now growing again and had taken on six new staff in recent weeks.

"We are still recruiting and are looking for around 15 more skilled sewing machinists and upholsterers," he added.

The number employed is back up to 120 at the business, which made 84 redundancies after losing a major customer in February last year.

An administration deal saved the jobs of the remaining 116 staff.

New care home backed

PROPOSALS to demolish a care home and build a 66-bed home next to the site in Kingswinford have been recommended for approval by council planners.

The new care home is planned beside New Bradley Hall, off Compton Drive, which will be torn down once the new build is finished and residents moved across.

The home and jobs were transferred to not-for-profit organisation Black Country Housing Group.

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£100,000 haul of cannabis plants

CANNABIS plants with a street value of £100,000 have been found growing at a property in Tipton.

Police raided a house in Hamilton Road in Great Bridge and a 31-year-old man was arrested at the scene.

Tweeting about the raid @TiptonWMP said: "Tipton Ward officers conducted a drugs warrant on Hamilton Road Great Bridge this morning. There was approx street value of £100,000 of drugs found in the property. A 31-year-old male has been arrested and is currently helping officers with their inquiries."

Meanwhile, in a separate raid police seized 30 plants at a property in Filey Road, Fordhouses, Wolverhampton.

Officers from the Low Hill, Fallings Park, Bushbury and Oxley Wolverhampton neighbourhood police team attended the property.

NEW CCTV cameras have been introduced in buses across the West Midlands to help police officers tackle anti-social behaviour and crime.

National Express West Midlands has installed the state-of-the-art 4G Vemotion CCTV units to some of its vehicles.

The technology allows the Safer Travel police team to tap into live CCTV feeds and view anti-social behaviour on any vehicles housing the equipment. The real-time footage means officers can then stop the bus and quickly act upon any anti-social behaviour.

CCTV footage from the buses has already re-

sulted in a 75 per cent success rate in identifying offenders. It is hoped that the new technology will make the police's work even more effective.

The installation of the cameras follows a successful trial of the 4G Vemotion CCTV units for BBC's Crimewatch Roadshow last year.

As part of the trial, a pickpocket was caught live on camera on the top deck of a National Express West Midlands bus and the Safer Travel control room dispatched a rapid response unit to arrest them, before the offender had even realised they had been caught.

Not only this, but passengers can also use the Safer Travel Partnership's 'See Something, Say Something' service to report any anti-social behaviour on National Express West Midlands

buses. The reports help to build data which assists officers in targeting crime hotspots.

Inspector Rachel Crump, policing lead for the Safer Travel Partnership, said: "Our job is to make sure people can travel safely on public transport and the information we receive from passengers through See Something, Say Something is incredibly useful. We use the information to look at hotspot routes or areas that we can target with the new 4G Vemotion units."

"Although they may not see blue lights arriving immediately, passengers can be assured that we are working hard behind the scenes to tackle anti-social behaviour on the bus network."

Crime on public transport in the West Midlands has fallen by 70 per cent in eight years.

Suspended jail term for attacks

A SEDGELEY pensioner carried out sex attacks on a schoolboy, a court heard. Wilfred Smith, aged 69, denied two charges of sexual assault on the boy but was found guilty by a jury after a trial at Wolverhampton Crown Court.

Smith, of Swallowfields Road, was given a 22-month jail term suspended for two years and must register as a sex offender for ten years. He was made the subject of a ten year Sexual Harm Prevention Order.

Judge James Burbidge QC ordered he pay £500 compensation to the victim. He told Smith: "You lost control of yourself on two occasions. I hope in the cold light of day you understand the gravity of what you have done."

Miss Amy Jackson, defending, said Smith, a former engineer, had no previous convictions for similar offending.

It's Hello Norma Jean...



Kerry Bridge, of Rowley Regis, is happy to have her pug puppy Norma Jean returned

WHEN Norma Jean the pug was stolen from a back garden her devastated owner thought she would never see her beloved pet again.

But it was soon 'Hello Norma Jean' as the family got the surprise of their lives when they found the puppy back safe and sound in the garden 24 hours later.

The dog's return is thought to have been prompted by a huge social media campaign to try and find her, which was seen from West Bromwich to West Virginia.

The four-month-old pup was apparently snatched after being let out into the garden on New Year's Eve. Within minutes she had gone.

To make matters worse, frantic owner Kerry Bridge was away on holiday in Tenerife – and began the hunt to find Norma Jean from the island.

NHS mental health drop-in session dates

DUDLEY and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust will be holding a series of drop-in events during 2017 at libraries within the borough.

The emotional health and wellbeing drop-ins are run by the Trust's Community Development Workers (CDWs) and will provide members of the public the opportunity to find out more information about improving their mental health and overall wellbeing.

The drop-ins are a chance for the local community to gain information from the CDW team, who will be on hand to signpost individuals and support them in contacting appropriate services and organisations. No booking or appointment is necessary.

These sessions will run on February 15 at Stourbridge Library between 1pm and 2.30pm, at Halesowen Library on March 2 between 10am and midday and at the same time on March 30 at Brierley Hill Library.

Seeking new volunteers

A COFFEE morning is being held for people interested in volunteering for a sight-loss charity.

The Beacon Centre in Sedgley is looking for help in filling roles across the Black Country and Staffordshire.

The coffee morning will be held at the charity's base on Wolverhampton Road East between 10am and 11.30am next Friday, January 27. To find out more about the volunteer opportunities, contact Becky Sinar by email at bsinar@beaconvision.org or call 01902 880111.

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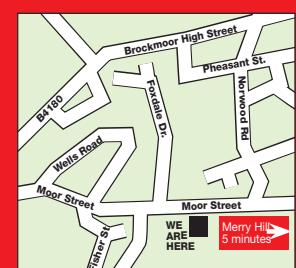
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At last! £7.5m boost to tackle pothole pitted roads

Billy Wright statue damaged by crash



The Billy Wright Statue outside Molineux was badly damaged after being hit by a vehicle in the early hours of Sunday. THE iconic Billy Wright statue outside Wolves' Molineux stadium has been badly damaged after it was hit by a car.

The plinth on which the statue of the Wolves and England legend stands was ripped apart by the force of the collision. A man has been arrested on suspicion of drink-driving. He has since been bailed.

Three slate slabs have torn off the structure, including the panel that carries Wright's name, which was smashed in two.

Vicky Wright, the daughter of the late player, said she was 'so sad' to hear about the statue.

The damage to the sculpture became visible as dawn broke on Sunday. Police cordoned off the area with tape.

A West Midlands Police spokesman said: "Officers have arrested a man following a collision with a statue outside the Molineux Stadium on Waterloo Road, in the early hours of Sunday morning. A 30-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of drink-driving and dangerous driving."

Canal will soon be locking good after its revamp

AN historic canal which runs through Wolverhampton will get a £120,000 revamp this year.

The Birmingham Canal Old Main Line runs through the city as well as other parts of the Black Country.

Now, a new programme of work will see the canal's lock gates replaced and historic brickwork restored.

The works are being carried out by skilled craftsmen and engineers from the Canal and River Trust, the charity that looks after 2,000 miles of waterways, as part of its annual winter maintenance programme.

The works on the Wolverhampton Flight will see £120,000 invested in new

lock gates, repairing brickwork and replacing lock ladders which enable boaters to climb up out of locks.

Work is expected to be completed in early February. In order for the repairs to take place sections of the canal will be drained of water and hundreds of fish rescued and moved to other parts of the canal. The old lock gates can then be lifted out by a crane and new ones fitted.

The new lock gates are hand-crafted using traditional methods in the trust's specialist workshops at Bradley and Stanley Ferry in Yorkshire.

To find out more go to www.canalrivetrust.org.uk

THE West Midlands and Staffordshire are to be given more than £7.5 million to tackle potholes.

The Government has revealed the amount each region will be receiving in the next financial year to fill in potholes as well as stop them forming in the first place.

The West Midlands will receive £7.67 million overall, including £1.22m for the West Midlands Combined Authority and £1.55m for Staffordshire.

The Government says the funding for the West Midlands, which also includes areas such as Hereford, Shropshire and Stoke, will lead to around 144,000 potholes being fixed in 2017/18.

Transport minister Andrew Jones said: "This Government is investing record amounts improving and maintaining highways across the country to help motorists."

The new funds have been backed by

Report by Jack Avery

South Staffordshire MP and the Conservative chief whip Gavin Williamson. He said: "The state of our roads is consistently raised with me by residents and remains a great source of frustration for drivers."

This funding is welcome news for families and businesses in Staffordshire who rely on our roads to get around. It builds on the £1,069,000 we got last year and is the latest step in our plan to build a country that works for everyone.

"The announcement shows that we are delivering on our commitment to invest in infrastructure to attract businesses and secure a better future for local businesses."

The funding allocated specifically for potholes is part of more than £115m the West Midlands is receiving to improve roads, cut congestion and improve journey times.

Including its £1.22m pothole fund, the West Midlands Combined Authority is set to receive £21.5m. This is broken down to £14.45m from the highways maintenance block needs formula and £5.79m from the national productivity investment fund.

The authority covers Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

Staffordshire, including Cannock Chase and Stafford, is to receive £23.14m in central government funding for its roads. This includes £17.85m from the highways maintenance block needs formula and £3.71m from the national productivity investment fund, on top of the £1.58m for potholes.

The state of the county's roads has been a long running sore point for residents, especially those in Cannock Chase.

Deputy leader of Cannock Chase District Council Gordon Alcott has previously claimed 'there must be a pothole on every road in Cannock Chase'.

MP backing church group with time and a £100 donation

DUDLEY North MP Ian Austin wants to help the group who have re-opened St John's Church in Kates Hill, Dudley.

The Labour MP has met with Deb Brownlee, who chairs the St John's Church Preservation Group, to affirm his support for their work to bring the church back into use, including worship.

The church was handed over to the group last year after a 14-year campaign to bring the church back into use after its closure in 2002.

Mr Austin signed up to commit to contributing two hours a month to the restoration project. He will also be donating £100 to the campaign from the good causes fund he set up with the MP pay rise.

Mr Austin said: "Deb Brownlee and her team have campaigned tirelessly to bring the church back into use for the community. They raised funds, recruited volunteers and worked non-stop to save the church for local people. I understand from Deb that there's still a lot of work. I promised at the election that when times are tough for so many local families I would use the MPs' pay rise to help good causes."

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The Old Deanery, which was replaced in the 1930s by Wolverhampton Polytechnic



Sedgley's Bullring, seen during the early 20th century



Digitalising glass negatives, volunteer Steve Martin, at Wolverhampton City Archives



Producing steel at Hickman Works, Springvale, Bilston



The iconic curved building which was the Victoria Hotel, now The Britannia Hotel situated in Lichfield Street

Steve brings pictures of city into the digital age

MEMORY LANE

By Marion Brennan

General Hospital, later renamed the Royal Hospital, in 1923.

More than 2,000 glass negatives, some more than 120 years old, are being converted to the new technology – and all by one man, prompted by his combined love of history and his adopted city.

Steve Martin spends a couple of days a week at the Wolverhampton Archives in Waterloo Road hunched over the dusty glass plates – the predecessor of photographic film – and is now more than halfway through the project.

The images include an early Wolves match, showing the players in knee breeches, with the spectators watching from a grassy bank just yards from the pitch.

Another shows a ward in the vast King Edward VII Memorial Wing which was added to the overcrowded Wolverhampton and Staffordshire

doner, he has lived in Wolverhampton for 28 years and enjoys great views of the city from his 10th floor flat, but says: "I wish I'd known Wolverhampton in those days." The archives' old-fashioned negatives date from the late 1800s, with many of the First World War period, and include some from the 1950s.

The sources of some of the negatives is known, with many of the church interiors bearing the stamp of professional photographer Bennett Clark while others came from individuals and newspapers.

He says: "The collection is a hotch-potch of images but together they provide a rich photographic tapestry of how Wolverhampton used to look."

* The Chronicle's sister newspaper, the Express & Star is working with Wolverhampton Archives and the University of Wolverhampton to digitise its collection of historic photographs. The project secured £59,000 in Heritage Lottery Fund support to develop plans to create a free to use website. To find out more go to: <https://twitter.com/ephotoarchive or www.facebook.com/photoarchivebid/>

Software

"We have no idea of the sources," said Mr Martin, who lives off Tettenhall Road. "The negatives have not been catalogued, and we don't know how long they have been there."

The keen photographer volunteered himself for the task and uses his own equipment to scan the images, including a software programme to stitch the bigger images together. A native Lon-



The site of the Royal London Building pre-1900



A Wolves match taking place at the Molineux in the 1890s, with a supporters stand in the distance

ADVERTISEMENT

Former midwife's smile reborn

'I'd grown tired of living my life around my teeth'

Former Dudley community midwife Vicki Ball, left, is full of smiles after getting new teeth and an implant solution to a long-standing stabilisation problem. 'I love my new teeth,' she says



MEETING Vicki Ball is all about the smiles – lots of them. She's generous with her compliments, can't wait for her next holiday adventure and has the most infectious of laughs.

Her company is light and she's gushing with the praise about her new look.

A retired community midwife who was based at the former Wordsley Hospital, the bubbly 60-something-year-old is quick to affirm: "I love my new teeth and they look natural, don't they?"

Adding: "You can't tell they're not my own," Vicki admits her smile has not always been

her favourite attribute. "I've always had trouble with my teeth; even as a young girl they crumbled and my gums used to bleed. Even though I was diligent about looking after them, they still let me down," she adds.

Two years ago, Vicki finally lost her remaining teeth. "I really don't know why my teeth were so bad, but I was the youngest of eight children and I understand my mother's priorities did not include teaching me how to brush my teeth. She had more pressing priorities of how she was going to put food on the table," Vicki recalls.

A teenager by the time she had her first tooth brush, she is convinced she couldn't

have done more to save her own teeth.

"For the last 18 months I've put up with ill-fitting and badly made dentures. My gums were always sore and the bottom denture was unstable.

Researching options

"My top teeth I could secure with a fixative, but for the bottom it was a waste of time – as soon as I had anything to eat the stability was over," says Vicki.

Her diet became restricted, avoiding beef and crispy fruits like apples.

Frustrated by the appearance and function of her teeth – they seemed to be set too far back, Vicki says – she started researching her options.

"I'd grown tired of living my whole life

around my teeth. I never really stopped going out, but when I did, I was always thinking ahead where I could go to take my teeth out. They were just so uncomfortable." A self-confessed lover of travel overseas – "it's my hobby" – Vicki saw an article in her local newspaper about Steven Burchell Dip CDT RCS(Eng) and his work at the Denture Clinic in North Street, Dudley.



North Street's dental implant surgeon, Dr Owain Rees (left) BDS, DGDP (UK) Dip Imp Dent (UCL) GDC 61576 with principal Steven Burchell Dip CDT RCS(Eng) GDC 108353

"I'd seen a piece about suction dentures and implant retained dentures and there seemed to be a solution for me," she says.

After seeing Steven and implant surgeon Dr Owain Rees BDS, DGDP (UK) DIP IMP DENT (UCL), Vicki's treatment included two implants to stabilise a lower over denture and the prescribing of high quality traditional upper dentures to help support her facial

features. "From start to finish it took 14 weeks, but it was worth the wait. When I first saw my teeth in the mirror, I thought they looked just like real teeth and . . . they feel like my own teeth."

Such a relief

"My husband, Terry, couldn't believe they were so good. Not to have to keep thinking about my teeth when I'm out is such a relief," she says.

Steven says: "Mrs Ball needed dentures that would offer proper support to her facial features."

"These days the term 'facelift' dentures is banded about. The claim is spurious, but with the correct setting of teeth, the effect is to lift the facial structures in the same way natural healthy gums and teeth support tissues and muscles. I'm very pleased to have been part be of giving a new birth the Vicki's smile."

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Church site ready to rise from the ashes



Reverend Leon Evans assessing the damage outside the Zion Christian Centre, in Halesowen, after the blaze in 2015

A CHRISTIAN centre hit by a blaze more than a year ago is set to rise from the ashes

Dozens of firefighters tackled the fire at Zion Christian Centre in Little Cornbow, Halesowen, in the early hours of August 30, 2015.

Extensive damage was caused to at least half of the centre's auditorium and smoke damage affected the rest of the building.

Now plans have been put forward for two of the site's buildings to be refurbished.

Reverend Leon Evans, who has been the church's pastor for more than 15 years, spoke of his delight that the church centre was to be restored.

Insurance

He said: "We had the insurance money come through before Christmas, so it took around 15 months for us to get it."

"We had four other buildings so we moved into the other two following the

fire. With the refurbishment now we plan to put the two buildings together to make a new 400-seater auditorium and conference centre."

Mr Evans said looking back, the fire had been 'somewhat blessing in disguise' as it had encouraged the community to work together.

"We've had more people come to the church than before," he said.

The plans include an illuminated sign.

A design statement says: "The Zion Christian Centre are looking to retain the 'industrial aesthetic' of the existing building but to ensure that the spaces are modern and welcoming."

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MP's call for action on Grayling bike incident

A BLACK Country MP has vowed to press for action after the Government's Transport Secretary knocked a cyclist off his bike in an accident near Parliament.

Video footage showed cyclist Jaiqi Liu, aged 35, crashing to the ground and his bike hit a lamp post after Epsom and Ewell MP Chris Grayling opened the door of his ministerial car on a street outside the Palace of Westminster.

Transport minister Andrew Jones said the matter was now closed after Mr Grayling apologised to Mr Liu, but Labour's Dudley North MP Ian Austin says that 'serious questions' remained unanswered.

"It might be closed for Chris Grayling but as far as I am concerned we are nowhere near to a satisfactory resolution," said Mr Austin, who is the former chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Cycling Group.

"At the very least he needs to show some understanding of the difficulties cyclists face on the roads."

Unacceptable

"It is completely unacceptable for the Transport Secretary to be leaving the scene of an accident without exchanging details."

"Car dooring" is a serious offence that has resulted in two people being killed on the streets of London in the not too distant past."

"I will continue to press for action and will be pushing for a detailed explanation from Mr Grayling regarding his behaviour."

Mr Austin has written to the Metropolitan Police and to Prime Minister Theresa May over the incident that took place on October 12 last year.

Mr Jones described the incident as 'an unfortunate accident' and



A photo taken shortly after the accident

added: "(Mr Grayling) got out of the car, checked the cyclist was OK and waited until he was back on his feet. He spoke to the cyclist and apologised; they shook hands. No details were requested at the time by either party."

"The Secretary of State has since been in contact with the cyclist and the matter is closed."

Mr Liu, who works at the World Bank, said in December that Mr Grayling should have stayed 'a bit longer' to check on him.

He also said he was in shock after the incident and only later became



Transport Secretary Chris Grayling aware of pain in his back, legs and head, adding that his bike's wheel, brakes, mudguard and lights were damaged.

Road safety campaigners criticised Mr Grayling over the incident. Duncan Dollimore, from Cycling UK's road safety and legal campaigns team, called for Mr Grayling to face criminal charges.

Mr Jones said the incident had been reported to the Department for Transport's permanent secretary on October 12 'following normal procedure'.

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Fast new X-ray hospital service

A SUPER-FAST X-ray scanner has arrived at Sandwell Hospital. The scanner will deliver high-quality images in a fraction of the time usually taken, and generate a much lower dose of radiation.

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust has become one of the first trusts in the country to install this equipment, which promises to cut waiting times.

Louise Harrison, superintendent radiographer, said: "This machine is a game changer. It enables us to reduce the time needed for each scan by half. We no longer need to move the scanning equipment to examine patients since the new machine can automatically move around to do the job. It also allows us to digitally share images with clinicians simultaneously so patients can be diagnosed right away."

£22m blueprint for new homes across the Black Country

HUNDREDS of much-needed affordable homes are set to be built in the Black Country in the next four years following a £22 million investment.

Walsall-based whg, one of the Black Country largest home providers, has confirmed it has been successful in applying for a substantial Government grant.

The firm has now vowed to build 751 homes between now and 2021, confirming that the Black Country will see around 200 of the new

properties, while the rest will be delivered in Worcestershire, Staffordshire and Shropshire.

The company has already confirmed its first schemes will begin in Walsall and South Staffordshire in April. In total 188 homes will be built in the first two years.

Mark Tranter, whg director of development, said: "The successful outcome of our bid has enabled us to secure funding for a significant proportion of our future new build growth programme.

"The funding will also include rent-to-buy homes, which will allow our customers to rent a

property whilst saving for a deposit to buy their first home."

It was welcome news following disappointment earlier this month when the local garden city scheme, that will see 45,000 homes built across the Black Country, failed in a bid for Government funding. Plans for the project, which spans 31 different sites, were omitted from the Department for Communities and Local Government's funding announcement.

Bosses behind the Black Country plans admitted the decision was 'disappointing' but insisted that the garden city scheme would go ahead.

Cyber crime survey held

WEST Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson has urged cyber crime victims in the Black Country to take part in a new survey.

Mr Jamieson has joined forces with other PCCs in Warwickshire, West Mercia and Staffordshire to run the survey and assess the impact of online crime.

The survey asks people to share their experiences of cyber crime via 36 questions – and the West Midlands PCC wants to hear the voice of victims in the Black Country.

This is the second regional cyber crime survey and will see how the problem has developed over 12 months. To take part in the cyber crime survey go to www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RegionalCyber16

Church closes for tile revamp



Buildings manager John Aldridge admires the new tile flooring at St Benedict Biscop Church

AN HISTORIC church has temporarily shut so work to restore its tiled floor to its former glory can be completed.

St Benedict Biscop Church in Wombourne can trace its origins to the 10th century and was originally built to pray for the souls of those killed at the Battle of Tettenhall, when Anglo-Saxon forces defeated a Viking army.

The current structure was built in the 19th century but in recent years its tile flooring has fallen into disrepair.

Work was carried out in 2014 to replace many of the broken tiles with modern alternatives which were identical in appearance.

Now further work has been commissioned which will allow the project to be completed. Specialist tilers will be brought in to construct and lay traditionally-made black and red tiles.

Birmingham Airport marks busiest year

BIRMINGHAM Airport is flying high after recording the busiest year in its 75 year history.

More than 11.6 million passengers passed through its terminal in 2016.

An additional 1.4 million people used the airport, boosting passenger numbers by 14.2 per cent to 11,639,738.

The busiest month was August, with almost 1.3 million passengers, and the busiest day was August 26.

Over the course of the year there were six months in which more than a million passengers were recorded and the airport has now seen 22 months of consecutive record breaking growth.

Birmingham's passenger figures added to the total as almost 845,000 passengers travelled through the terminal in the final month of 2016 – an increase of 23.7 per cent on December 2015, which is equivalent to more than 161,000 more people.

Happy diet talk by chef

CELEBRITY chef Tom Kerridge is coming to Birmingham to talk about his new book Dopamine Diet and his own dramatic weight loss.

His talk at Birmingham Town Hall has been arranged with city bookshop Foyles. The Michelin-starred chef will appear on Monday at 7.30pm with ticket price including a copy of the new book. The recipes put the focus on healthy food that releases the 'happy hormone' dopamine and the chef shares how the diet worked for him.

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MP says UK should back Trump over trade deals

BRITAIN must aim for the 'best possible business relationship' with the US to make a success of Brexit, says Dudley South MP Mike Wood.

The Conservative MP has welcomed comments from President-elect Donald Trump, saying that Britain and America will get a new trade deal 'done quickly and done properly' as he promised to help make Brexit work.

Mr Wood has urged ministers to 'get behind' Mr Trump as he prepares to enter the White House tomorrow (Friday).

Mr Trump has pledged to meet with Theresa May to discuss trade relations soon after his inauguration.

Mr Wood, who last July met with members of Congress in Washington DC to discuss the possibility of Mr Trump becoming president, said: 'At the time there was a great deal of concern from both Democrats and Republicans about what Mr Trump would be like should he become president.'

'We have now moved on from that and are in a position where we should be getting behind him



Dudley South MP Mike Wood

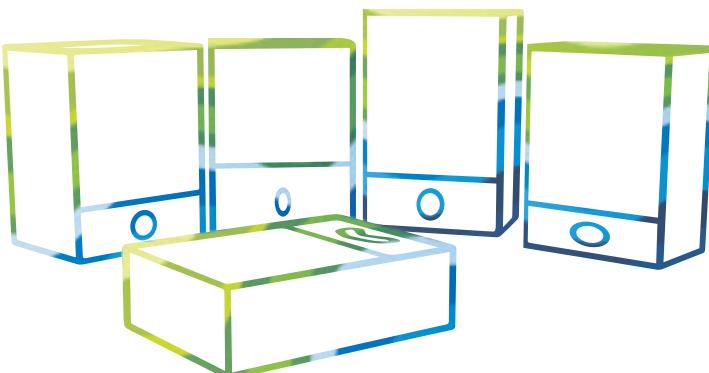


President-elect Donald Trump

and pushing for the best possible business relationship between our two countries. The early indications are that Mr Trump wants to build on the long-standing connection that exists between us. Without the EU, America is the single largest market for Britain. Mr Trump's comments suggest there is huge potential for the Prime Minister to secure a strong trading deal.'

Mr Trump said that Britain was 'doing great' following its vote to leave the EU, and added that the UK was 'so smart in getting out'.

Labour's Walsall North MP David Winnick has accused Mr Trump of 'patronising and belittling' the UK by suggesting America could play a defining role in Britain's future outside the European Union.



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Bill could battle it out for UKIP at by-election

WEST Midlands MEP Bill Etheridge has put himself forward as UKIP's potential candidate for the upcoming Stoke-on-Trent Central by-election.

The seat has become vacant after Labour's Tristram Hunt stood down to take over as director at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London.

UKIP has vowed to go all out to win

the seat after it polled 22.7 per cent of the vote in the 2015 general election.

Mr Etheridge, who is also a Sedgley councillor on Dudley Council, said UKIP leader Paul Nuttall was 'strongly considering' standing.

But he added: 'If Paul decides against it there are some people who are pretty high up in the party who

think it should be me. I've put my name forward and we'll just have to see what happens.'

Mr Etheridge, who was sent by Mr Nuttall to the Potteries to launch the party's campaign, says his party is in 'pole position' to take the seat. He added: 'The people there voted in huge numbers to leave the EU.'

Springboard events for elderly bounce back after closure

ACTIVITY sessions for the elderly have bounced back to life following funding cuts in Dudley.

The closure of the popular Age UK Springboard Activity centre, left hundreds of elderly residents without a place to go at the end of last year.

It was axed after funding was pulled by the Big Lottery and Dudley Council.

Now former employee Sandy Jones has set up 'Bounce Back to health & happiness' - with her own money.

Bounce Back opened its doors for the first time last week and saw dozens arrive to see what the new venture had to offer.

A variety of activities, courses, trips and social events for people aged 50 and over in the Black Country will be on offer four days a week at the same prices as before - £2.50 per session.

It operates from St Paul's, in Hawbush Road, Brierley Hill and Quarry Bank Community Centre.

Almost all of the activities, classes, staff, volunteers and the 700 members have moved over to Bounce Back.

Alternative

Sandy Jones, the new managing director, said: 'Most of the people who attended the old centre are over the moon that we have been able to provide an alternative for them.'

'Our oldest person was a hundred years old in the summer and for some of them, we were the only personal contact they had all week.'

'I would have been willing to give up my redundancy pay to enable them to avoid loneliness and isolation.'

As part of the new services there will be a 'men's morning' where the men can play cards, dominoes, and have a chat.

Bosses are also urging for anyone to come forward with ideas for alternative classes.

Before its closure, Age UK Springboard looked after more than 700 people by holding weekly activities including exercise classes and ballroom dancing. They had three staff and around 40 volunteers.

Due to the funding cuts, it was announced that the centre would not be able to continue after 13 years.

More than 250 people attended a farewell party for the centre at the Copthorne Hotel in December.

For further information on the 'Bounce Back' provision call 07491 312825 or email bounceback2017@hotmail.com for costs and details.

Rail pastor bid to save lives



Rail pastor church volunteers join officers at Stourbridge Junction

A PROJECT to save lives on railways in the West Midlands was launched on the same day dubbed by many as the most depressing day of the year.

Blue Monday (January 16) is described as the unhappiest date on the calendar with people are left facing dark mornings, post-Christmas debts and a month of restraint after over-indulgence during the festive period.

In 2016, officers in the West Midlands attended more than 460 mental health incidents, 21 suspected suicides and six people believed to have deliberately harmed themselves on railways. They also made 80 life-saving interventions.

In a bid to help officers, rail pastors - an initiative from the Ascension Trust made up of volunteers from local churches - now patrol platforms and trains on the line between Stourbridge and Birmingham Snow Hill, looking out for distressed people. They are the fifth dedicated rail pastor team in the country, taking the number of volunteers on the network to around 100.

Inspector Dave Rams, from British Transport Police in Birmingham, said: 'We look forward to working with the pastors.'

Business links bring airline back to Brum

AIRLINE bmi regional has returned to Birmingham for the first time in more than two years.

It is launching flights to Nuremberg in Germany, Gothenburg in Sweden and Graz in Austria.

One aircraft will be based at Birmingham with the Graz flights starting next month. Services to Nuremberg and Gothenburg start in May.

It comes after bmi regional pulled out of Birmingham in 2014 after briefly operating services to Lyon, Toulouse, Gothenburg and Billund.

Jochen Schnadt, chief

commercial officer from bmi regional, said: 'We are delighted to be introducing flights from Birmingham as part of our ongoing growth strategy to connect key business regions. The Midlands is a powerhouse for business and industry in the UK and arguably the real home of the Made in Britain label.'

'Having frequent connections to other European business centres is therefore critical for the region. Given this strong business affinity, we believe our new Graz, Nuremberg and Gothenburg routes will prove very popular with business customers.'

Thomas Dudley wins foundry safety award

THE award-winning foundry division of Thomas Dudley has scooped a Safety and Health Foundry Targets Initiative award.

The 2016 award was given to the Dudley-based group's foundry division due to its staff working proactively as a team within time constraints, identifying any issues and implementing a 'five step solution' to obtain a record-breaking result within the electric furnace melting deck area.

Dave Oddy, metal melt manager, said: 'We're extremely pleased to see our hard work was successful. It was important to embrace

our core values within the organisation, 'Safety First'. 'Working within this environment our main priority was on-site safety and housekeeping, given the nature of the electric melting process.'

'All obsolete and unused items were removed from the site, then we stored all equipment and consumables in close proximity to the furnaces and the whole area received a thorough clean and fresh coat of paint.'

Every team member attended workshops so that standards could be diligently maintained at the end of each shift.

Simple steps homeowners can take now to protect their assets.

Head of April King Legal Paul King explains why some homeowners are doing **too little, too late** to protect their hard-earned assets.

Care Cost Fees

"A lot of people are still unaware that if they need care in later life, their assets will be means-tested by the Local Authority to help pay for these services."

"The Local Authority will look to use the assets of a person until they get down to a lower limit of £14,250, when the Local Authority will take over the fees."

"For instance, my own grandmother sadly passed away recently at the age of 92. My grandfather had died many years earlier and left everything to her."

"When she needed care in the last six years of her life, because my grandfather had left everything to her, the house and all the estate was counted in the Local Authority's means test."

"Our clients tell us, 'We've worked hard all our lives, why should the Local Authority get it all?'"

"Just as she died, she had gone down to that lower limit of £14,250 and that's all her children inherited."

"There are many myths about the steps people can take to protect their assets from being used like this."

"The main one is that a parent should simply sign their house over to the children now, so it won't be taken into consideration for means testing. That's just not true."

"Local Authorities will actually look to see if you've 'deliberately deprived' yourself of an asset by giving property away, going back over any period in time."

"Sometimes people think that if the gift is made seven years prior then the house is safe. This is not so as the seven-year rule only applies to Inheritance Tax and not Local Authority care."

"The solution is for couples to simply not leave everything to each other in the first place."

"What my grandfather could have done is leave his half of the house in trust to his children, stating that they couldn't have it while his wife, my grandmother, was still alive. We call these Property Trust Wills."

"If my grandfather had left his half of the house in trust to the grandchildren then when my grandmother subsequently received care in her later life she would only have been means tested on her own half of the house, but my grandfather's half would have been safe."

"Why should he have to contribute his half when he didn't receive any care?"

"The important factor is that couples need to act in advance. Once one party dies or loses mental capacity, through a stroke for example, then they are no longer in a position to do this legitimate and straightforward type of planning."

"It is therefore important for couples to act now even if they may not foresee care fees being an issue."

Paul goes on to explain that most clients he sees are surprised to learn remarriage usually cancels a Will and makes the spouse next in line to inherit, ahead of their own children! Protecting your half of the house in this way, he suggests, ensures that your children ultimately inherit when the survivor dies.

"Had my grandmother remarried after the death of my grandfather the whole estate could have passed sideways out of the family," says Paul.

Lasting Power of Attorney

Paul explains how people often get confused thinking that, because they have made a Will, their executors can also deal with assets if there is illness, stroke or some other form of incapacity while they are still alive.

"Everyone should actually have two documents – a Will that deals with their estate on death, and a Lasting Power of Attorney that deals with their estate during their lifetime," he says.

"There are two types of Lasting Power of Attorney – one deals with finance, the other deals with health and welfare."

"In many ways it's similar to a passport; a document that's registered now and one which can be physically handed to the attorneys should the need arise."

"It allows the attorneys, perhaps the children, to deal with the banks and pension companies etc should their parent become incapacitated, but also to deal with matters such as where the parent should be living and how they should receive care."

"Your attorneys, again perhaps your children, must legally act in your best interests at all times."

"You can choose a number of attorneys to act, either jointly or independently, and April King advises on the various options available."

"Couples are often surprised to discover that even joint bank accounts can be frozen until the bank sees sight of a Lasting Power of Attorney document."

"Having a Lasting Power of Attorney removes the burden on children should ill health happen further down the line."

"It helps a family deal with bank accounts and so on during a parent's lifetime and ceases on death."

"Crucially, you have to complete a Lasting Power of Attorney while you are still in good mental health."

"If someone becomes ill through say, a stroke or dementia, this option is lost and the family would have to apply for a Deputyship Order from the Court of Protection – a drawn out and expensive process."

"It is therefore a good idea for clients to plan ahead and remove any future burden from the family."

"Once again, all adults should be thinking of this, particularly when there are children or a business involved."

"It's not just something to think about when you get older, that's the challenge for us."

"People think, 'I'm not ill, why do I need to make a Power of Attorney?' But they're missing the point. This is a document that has to be done in advance."



Paul King, Head of April King Legal

"The Lasting Power of Attorney remains in place until you die unless you want to cancel it."

"Once it's registered, you don't have to worry if you then develop some debilitating illness. A burden has been removed from the family at an already difficult time."

Bloodline Trust Wills

The majority of April King's clients have already made standard 'Mirror Wills' with other firms before approaching the Firm. A Mirror Will is when a couple leave everything to each other on the first death, then to the children when the second partner dies. But modern family life means these type of Wills leave a lot to chance.

Explains Paul: "If I have a Mirror Will leaving everything to my wife and she remarries or goes into care after my death then either the new husband or the Local Authority are likely to inherit most, if not all, of my estate ahead of my children."

"Even if my children are named in my Mirror Will, it is by no means certain that they will inherit anything."

"Once again, this is because a remarriage would cancel the Will my wife had previously made with me and make the new husband next-of-kin."

"This often comes as a big shock to my clients who had perhaps thought that all was in order and that the family bloodline would one day inherit."

"The same is true for thinking that their children and/or grandchildren will one day benefit under a Mirror Will."

"If any of your children should die leaving everything to their husband or wife and that son-in-law or daughter-in-law should then remarry, then your grandchildren would be the ones to lose out under the line of inheritance."

"Worse still, someone else's grandchildren would be in line to receive the benefit of all your years of hard work."

"I've experienced this in my own family and I'm sure most people have had similar experiences or heard of someone who has."

"Bloodline Trust Wills give greater protection to your children."

"These type of Wills not only give your children complete control and access to the inheritance they receive from you, they also grant added protection from the twists and turns of modern family life."

"The wording in these Wills states that any money left over on their demise must pass to any children born of them – your grandchildren."

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April King has prepared a free information pack for readers of the Dudley & Sandwell Express & Star which is available by calling

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Lines open Mon-Fri 8am-7pm,
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Scents to sweeten the sharp winter air

Blow the January blues away with some deliciously scented winter plants. Hannah Stephenson picks a variety that pack a gloriously perfumed punch

THERE may be few reasons to venture into the garden at this time of year, but scent is one of them.

The rich, heady perfume of certain winter-flowering shrubs can blow away the cobwebs and brush off the worst of the winter blues.

Just inhaling the delicious fragrance of shrubs like mahonia, Christmas box (*Sarcococca confusa*) and *Viburnum x bodnantense* as you view the garden should shake off any reluctance you might have harboured about venturing outdoors in the first place.

Add to that the bare-branched stems and light yellow, beautifully-perfumed flowers of wintersweet, the sulphur yellow flowers along the bare spreading branches of witch hazel and the strong-scented clusters of white flowers which appear on shrubby honeysuckle in winter, and your olfactory senses should be in their element.

Of course, you don't want one perfume to overshadow another, and indeed, scented shrubs require a variety of conditions and space, but here's a few of the best that will provide scent, colour and form:

Shrubby honeysuckle (*Lonicera x purpurea*)

Not a bit like a regular honeysuckle, but a close cousin nevertheless, this neat rounded bush grows to 2m x 2m and is covered in winter with clusters of strongly scented, white flowers.

Grow it in any good garden soil in sun or light shade. Trim the flowered stems back to a sideshoot each year once the flowers are over to keep a good shape.

Mahonia x media 'Charity'

This upright plant, which grows 2m high and 1m wide, has tooth-edged, leathery evergreen leaves and spikes of brilliant yellow scented flowers that smell a bit like lily of the valley in winter.

It should be planted in light shade with a little shelter, so is ideally placed with others in a large border.

Cut off some of the branches bearing flowers for indoor decorations, and if the shrub becomes leggy, cut it back hard after flowering.



Witch hazel (*Hamamelis mollis 'Pallida'*)

Significant spidery-shaped sulphur-yellow flowers appear along its spreading branches and can be in flower from autumn through to spring in a sheltered spot, or in a mild winter.

The golden colour of the leaves in autumn is also worth noting. Another good one is *H. x intermedia 'Arnold Promise'*, which produces wonderfully scented yellow flowers.

Witch hazels are great for urban gardens as their leafless branches in winter cast no shade and they are also pretty compact.

Wintersweet (*Sarcococca confusa*)

These tough evergreen shrubs are invaluable in the garden in winter, their dense forms covered in glossy, dark green leaves, bearing clusters of white flowers followed by round, glossy berries.

But their best asset is their scent, a sweet, powerful fragrance which carries a surprising distance, even on the coldest day.

If you want scent indoors, just cut a few stems and they will fill a room with rich fragrance. Grow them with other winter-flowering plants such as *Viburnum x bodnantense 'Dawn'* and *Helleborus niger*, or as an informal hedge.

Daphne bholua

The pretty pink-purple and white flowers on this medium-sized evergreen shrub pack a perfumed punch and brighten up any shady border in winter. It's compact by nature, but will reach a maximum height of 2.5m and spread 1.5m in 10 years if you plant it in fertile, humus-rich soil that won't dry out too much in summer.

Of course, there are also smaller plants that will give you fragrance in winter, such as the pint-sized *Crocus sieberi 'Bowles's White'*, with its pure white flowers and gold throats, or the snowdrop, *Galanthus magnet*, and the *Iphione 'Alberto Castillo'*, a member of the onion family that grows to just 18cm, its white scented star-shaped flowers facing the sky.

Grow them near the patio door to enjoy the best of the fragrance.



Christmas rose, *Helleborus niger*, has delicate flowers

Brightening the scene with delicate blooms

BEST OF THE BUNCH

- *Helleborus*

IT may be known as the Christmas rose, but the helleborus generally blooms in January, its delicate-looking saucer-shaped blooms brightening the scene in shades of white, pink or purple.

The best place for it is the front of the border where nearby evergreen shrubs will protect it from winter winds and its flowers are best displayed, emerging between January and March, depending on the type. *H. niger* grows to around 45cm producing white flowers with central golden stamens. The Lenten rose blooms later, between February and April, producing white, pink or purple flowers. Dig in compost and leaf mould before planting, watch out for slugs in spring and water in dry weather.

GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT

- Growing onions from sets

JANUARY is a good time to look out for onion sets in garden centres if you want to grow your own. They are much easier than seeds and low-maintenance once you've started them off.

Look out for the small garden bulbs and store them in a dry place ready for planting in March.

Dig over the ground in winter, adding compost and firm the surface before planting. Plant sets 10cm (4in) apart in mid-March to mid-April, with the tips just showing, firming soil around the sets. Protect them from birds with netting and keep them weed-free. They should be ready for lifting between July and September. Good varieties include 'Rumba' and 'Sturon'.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

1. Prepare celery trenches, digging in plenty of organic matter.
2. Cover areas still to be dug with a sheet of polythene to keep off rain and snow.

3. If your seed and potting compost is kept in a cold place, bring it into the greenhouse several days before use to warm it up to the glasshouse temperature.
4. Check stakes and ties on newly planted trees, making sure they are not rubbing.

5. Take root cuttings from oriental poppies, verbasum, Primula denticulata, Phlox paniculata, rhus and other plants.
6. Enrich soil with compost where beans are to be grown.
7. Wash and sterilise pots and seed trays.

Holidays that indulge a passion for gardens

By Hannah Stephenson

NEW Year is the time when we think about booking our holidays – and for the green-fingered, that might include a garden visit or even a garden-themed break.

Some tour operators, including Saga, have introduced new special interest holidays into their 2017 product range.

"Over the past couple of years, we have really seen a surge in demand for our horticultural programme," says Saga's special interest holiday creator Tremaine Moore.

"For garden lovers, I think the attraction is the mix of visiting outstanding gardens combined with the opportunity to see the local wild flora, especially when it comes to the trips overseas."

Among Saga's new range is a tour in September to the Western Cape in South Africa, including wild flora visits and entrance to some of the country's most famous gardens. It also has three new UK holidays in summer, taking in some prestigious gardens including RHS Wisley, Sheffield Botanical Gardens and Renishaw (www.saga.co.uk)

New destination itineraries for RHS Garden Holidays include Marrakech and Flowers of the Atlas, visiting some of the exciting new gardens in Morocco, including that of Tom Stuart-Smith; Oregon; in the Footsteps of David Douglas holiday, following the route of the famous Scots botanist; and Burle Marx Gardens of Rio & Brazil's Natural Wonders which includes exclusive visits to some of the private gardens designed by the celebrated Brazilian landscape architect.

The society is also launching a holiday taking in the new RHS Chatsworth Flower Show, plus breaks featuring private gardens of East Anglia and private gardens of Guernsey (020 3735 1855, rhsgardenholidays.com).

But if you just want to do your own thing, here are four of the best gardens around the world to explore at your leisure:

Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, Cape Town (www.sanbi.org)

Now part of a UNESCO World Heritage site, these stunning gardens, only 13km from Cape Town, provide a marvellous showcase for South Africa's indigenous flora, with more than 7,000 plant species, including the king protea (South Africa's national flower), fynbos, agapanthus and a rich collections of bulbs, alpines and ferns.

Best time to visit: If you want to see proteas in full bloom, go in South Africa's winter - June, July and August. To see the fynbos at its best and the most plants in flower, go from the end of winter, spring or early summer (Aug-Nov).

Powerscourt Gardens, Enniskerry, County Wicklow, Ireland (powerscourt.com)

The gardens and grand Palladian villa at Powerscourt, south of Dublin, were designed in the 18th century and punctuate 47 acres of formal walled gardens and shaded ponds. The grounds, waterfalls, parks, gar-



Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, in Cape Town, is one of the top destinations for garden-loving holidaymakers



Cherry blossom at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden, in New York



The ornate Villa d'Este Park in Tivoli, Lazio, Italy

den pavilions, and fine tree-lined arbors were suggested by the Italian Renaissance and the great estates and gardens of France and Germany. Cascading terraces and formal landscapes are planned with carefully designed walks that are framed by the gentle beauty of the Wicklow Mountains.

Best time to visit: April to August

Brooklyn Botanic Garden, New York (www.bbg.org)

If you're visiting the Big Apple in 2017, take time out from the hubbub of the city to explore this 52-acre garden, home to thousands of plants and trees, as well as a

Japanese garden where river turtles swim alongside a Shinto shrine. Among the showstopping highlights are the blooming cherry trees, a gift from Japan, which are celebrated in Sakura Matsuri, the Cherry Blossom Festival.

Best time to visit: April or May when the cherry blossom is at its peak

Villa d'Este, Tivoli, Italy (www.villadestetivoli.info)

This hugely ornate and awe-inspiring Italian Renaissance garden is awash with theatrical fountains and magnificent statues and is listed as one of Italy's major historical/artistic sites. It all began when a Renaissance cardinal decided to turn a dilapidated Benedictine monastery into a beautiful villa, embellished with gardens awash with fountains, including the Fontana del Bicchierone, where water spills from a large shell-shaped basin, and The Avenue of the Hundred Fountains, which features animal heads, lilies, a small boat and basins which all spurt water.

Best time to visit: In summer, when escaping the heat from Rome, visitors should enjoy the cool combination of garden shade and cold running water.

Living museum member bonus

PRIORITY booking for some of the Black Country Living Museum's top events will soon be available.

Tickets for Peaky Blinders events, 1940s Weekend and more went on sale yesterday (Wednesday) for members with a 20 per cent discount.

Members will also be entitled to event fast tracking, 25 per cent off for friends and family daytime visits, 20 per cent off food and shopping and will be treated to a series of exclusive behind-the-scenes experiences.

Included with membership is 12 months' unlimited daytime entry to the museum which includes access to the programme of daytime events and activities. This will include events such as 'Industrial Might' in April, 'Steam Weekend' in May and even a 1940s-themed 'Dig for Victory' weekend in the autumn.

Prices start from £30 a year for a single membership going up to £65 a year for a family (two adults and up to three children).

Visit www.bclm.com for more information or to book tickets.

More than 1,800 are seeking help as debt crisis worsens

NEARLY 1,800 people across Dudley, Wolverhampton and Walsall contacted a debt charity in just six months – seeking help with liabilities totalling nearly £25 million.

A total of 1,778 people in the DY, WV and WS postcode areas contacted the StepChange charity during the first half of 2016, equivalent to 10 calls every day.

The WS postcode area, which also includes Lichfield and Cannock, had the biggest average debt levels at £15,932 for each individual.

The charity provided help to a total of 614 people in the area, up from 590 during the same period the previous year, and the total level of debt rose from £9.4 million to £9.8 million.

A total of 645 people from the WV postcode

Report by Mark Andrews

area contacted the charity during the first six months of last year, with an average debt of £12,415.

Total debt in the area that the charity helped with was just over £8 million, up from £7.3 million compared to the previous year.

The Dudley postal area, which includes Tipton, Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley, accounted for 519 of the charity's calls, and the average amount owed was £13,459. These figures were a marked improvement compared to the previous year, with total debt falling from nearly £9.2 million to just under £7 million.

In the Birmingham postcode area – which includes most of Sandwell – 2,919 people contacted the charity about debts totalling £39.6 million – an average of £13,565 for each person – while the ST postal district – including Stafford – saw 828 seek help with debts totalling £12.6 million – an average of £15,205 per individual.

Low interest rates are encouraging more people to take out loans or buy on credit. But there are fears people are borrowing beyond their means and a rate rise could see a rush of reposessions.

Roger White of StepChange said the first half of 2016 had been its busiest on record, adding: "Consumer credit is now at its highest since the financial crisis."

"It is vital creditors are lending responsibly and, before taking credit, people need to think carefully about whether they need it and whether they can afford it."

Worryingly, some people were spending more each month than they actually earned.

Merry Hill bus station revamp

WORK to revamp Merry Hill bus station was getting under way this week.

The £550,000 upgrade will see the addition of enclosed shelters with covered walkways and real-time information boards.

The scheme is being carried out by centre owners Intu and Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), part of the West Midlands Combined Authority. Bosses were keen to improve the station for shoppers and ensure they no longer have to cross in front of buses. Around one in five visitors arrive at Merry Hill by bus.

The station refit is due to be completed by late spring and during this time the car park near Matalan will be partially closed.

Councillor Richard Worrall, chairman of TfWM, said: "Intu Merry Hill is one of the biggest retail and employment centres in the West Midlands and good public transport links and infrastructure are of huge importance, so I am delighted we are able to work with Intu in improving bus facilities there."



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ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES



with John Ridgway of Perry & Phillips

AT this time of year the auction house is inundated with people keen to sell items to raise cash after the Christmas buying frenzy and they always want to know what will sell in the saleroom.

And again, at the beginning of each new year, I am more than happy to let them have a few pointers as to what items will attract the bidders at -so here goes!

The watchword is quality, in terms of all pieces, buyers will be looking for the best in 2017 rather than 'cheap and cheerful'.

Let's start with silver.

It continues to be very popular, with pieces often selling for their intrinsic value as opposed to their metal content value.

Good quality silver is very saleable and the really good pieces can make excellent sums auction - a superb Georgian chocolate pot sold for more than £6,000 a few months ago.

The collectors will be on the look-out for all kinds of quality silver items, from salvers and punchbowls to candlesticks and candelabras.

There are certain names to watch for, including the famous Paul Storr, a silver and goldsmith who produced some incredible pieces during the late 18th and early 19th century.

Although Storr did design items for royalty he also made a wide range of tableware and there are no fewer than 12 Paul Storr maker marks that identify his work.

The appeal of vintage china varies from year to year as buyers' tastes change, what was popular two years ago need not necessarily be so now and if you have china you would like to sell it's a good idea to do a little research before bringing the items in for valuation.

Beswick horses, for example, used to gallop out of the saleroom but now they are down to a steady trot - unless you have one that is sought after by collectors, such as a model of Arkle or Nijinsky or those in Rocking Horse Grey.

We also find that certain Beswick animals such as pigs and bulls do quite well, again if they are considered collectable and the right buyers are there on the day.

Royal Worcester continues to stay the saleroom pace, we sold a huge collection of the Fallen Fruit range for hundreds of pounds in 2016 and I'm confident that this lovely china will remain a firm favourite.

Costume jewellery is very likely to remain popular - as is the 'Real McCoy', bidders are very keen to get their hands on quality pieces in gold, silver and platinum so if you have any really nice rings, bracelets, necklaces, earrings etc that you are prepared to part with then do bring them in for valuation.

And of course quirky items are always of interest, we all remember the fabulous Scrimshaw walking cane, that sold for a staggering £46,000 after being kept on top of a wardrobe for 30 years, and the ship's bell that had the bidders all at sea!

So if items you would like to sell at auction remember that quality is all-important and that the value of vintage items is never set in stone and changes from year to year.

The next Perry and Phillips sale of antiques and collectables takes place at the Mill Street saleroom, in Low Town, Bridgwater, on Tuesday February 7 - the auctions are now bi-monthly.

Valuation days, for sale items only, are held at the saleroom every Wednesday from 10am until 4pm.

</div

Ambitious Manor House restoration is approved

AMBITION plans to invest more than £2.5 million in a historic landmark building have won approval from council leaders.

Sandwell Council is applying for money from the Heritage Lottery Fund so it can restore the timber-framed Grade I Manor House in Stone Cross which dates back to the 13th century.

Councillors have given the go-ahead to apply for funding which, if successful, will improve access to more of the historic house, remove unsympathetic extensions, correct patched and temporary repairs and enhance the grounds.

Councillor Richard Marshall, Sandwell Council's cabinet member for leisure, said: "Our aim is to restore and improve the Manor House so it can take its justifiable place as one of the most significant heritage buildings in the West Midlands."

Structure

A significant programme of physical works is proposed in line with the recommendations of the 2011 Conservation Plan as part of the work to the building if the bid is successful.

A report before councillors outlines a programme of repairs to the physical structure of the building including the removal of inappropriate 20th century materials and repairs in line with current best practice as specified in the Conservation Plan.

Officers want to improve the physical access around the building through alterations in floor levels, re-opening historic doorways and new improved stairs and upper floor access.

And they want to remove the poor quality extensions to the building dating back to the days when it was used as a pub in the 1960s as well as provide new facilities including a classroom and toilets in adjacent buildings.

Officers say a successful bid would also enable further archaeological investigations in significant parts of the



£2.5 million investment – The Manor House, at Hall Green Road, West Bromwich

building, particularly the chapel range and the newly-discovered 15th century bakery.

They would also carry out a range of hard landscaping improvements including developing dedicated pedestrian access from Hall Green Road, re-laying and re-organising the car park and developing part of the existing car park as a hard-surfaced events area.

Councillor Marshall added: "If we get funding, then the capital works will enable more and better events at

the Manor House and make it a quality asset in the heart of the community."

Council officers will now seek a stage-one pass for development funding of £142,000 as part of an overall capital project with a total value of £2,500,000 with 80 per cent support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the 20 per cent from Sandwell Council.

The development phase is estimated at costing £142,000 with a council contribution of £28,400.

Youngsters on track for more success



Young athletes, left, Iris Oliarnyk, and right, Will Hall, with Sandwell leisure chief, Councillor Richard Marshall

IT'S going to be a big year for Sandwell's top young athletes, who are gearing up for a busy 2017.

Eighteen year old para-swimmer Scott Hadley, from Tipton, is aiming to build on a brilliant performance at the national para-swimming championships in Manchester last month.

Overall Scott achieved four personal best performances from his seven races, including winning gold medals in the men's 100m Backstroke (category S8) and the men's 100m Breaststroke (category SB7) representing the Orion swimming club.

Scott also picked up two silver med-

als during the two-day meeting, when he was competing with some of the GB para-Olympic team from last summer's Rio games.

Seventeen-year-old William Hall from Cradley Heath is also looking forward to 2017. Hockey player Will is already rated as one of the top eight goalkeepers in the country after an impressive training camp with England Hockey at Loughborough and a starring role at the Hockey Futures Cup competition in September. Will is now setting his sights on breaking into the England U18 squad.

Another young athlete who ended

the year on a high is 15-year-old Iris Oliarnyk, from Oldbury. Iris is already representing England in the pentathlon and recently won a team gold as part of the England team competing at Athlone in Ireland. Iris won an individual bronze medal with a personal best score of 3446 points.

2017 will be a big year for Iris, who is already among the top young pentathletes in the country and will now step up to compete in the heptathlon, meaning Iris will add the javelin and 200 metres to her skills set.

Councillor Richard Marshall, cabinet member for leisure and chairman

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Reckless night out

Taylor and the boys
are back – Page 31



Glenn Hughes

See Page 31

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Declan McKenna



Wednesday, 7.30pm
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Longlisted for the BBC's Sound of 2017, this Hertfordshire teenager is a tip for the top with his quirky pop. Check out recent single Isombard. Visit hareandhoundskingsheath.co.uk

King Creosote



Saturday, 7.30pm
Town Hall, Birmingham
Fife singer-songwriter Kenny Anderson (AKA King Creosote, above) brings his distinctive modern folk, complete with bagpipes, in the wake of latest album Astronaut Meets Appleman. Visit www.thsh.co.uk

Primitive London feat Juice Aleem



Wednesday, 8pm
Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath
Birmingham rapper Juice Aleem (pictured), formerly of hip-hop trio New Flesh, joins the Anglo-French imaginary soundtrack quartet. Support from electronic outfit Delta Autumn. Visit bit.ly/primitivelondonfeatujuicealeem

Brendan Cole - All Night Long



Thursday (Jan 26), 7.30pm
Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton
The Strictly Come Dancing professional brings his latest choreographed spectacular out on tour with lots of dancers plus a band and singers on stage. Visit www.grandtheatre.co.uk



The US rockers hope their fans will enjoy A Day To Remember at their concert in Birmingham

This band will be a name to remember

IF the musical genre metalcore is a mystery to you, then Florida's A Day To Remember may be the biggest band you've never heard of.

But this pop-punk outfit from Ocala have become massive Stateside since releasing their debut *And Their Name Was Treason* in 2005.

They've sold more than a million units, racked up over 400 million Spotify streams and 500 million YouTube views, garnered two gold-selling albums and singles (and one silver album in the UK) and sold out entire continental tours (including their own curated Self Help Festival). They have amassed a global fanbase whose members number in the millions.

All of which explains why Rolling Stone called them "An Artist You Need To Know."

On Wednesday they play the Barclaycard Arena in Birmingham with support from fellow Florida rockers New Found Glory, Wrexham pop-punkers Neck Deep and Kent emo outfit Moose Blood.

For new album *Bad Vibrations*, the quintet of vocalist Jeremy McKinnon, guitarists Kevin Skaff and Neil Westfall, bassist Joshua Woodard and drummer Alex Shelnutt switched gears and headed for uncharted territory. Their path included a loose and much more collaborative songwriting process, one that also saw them recording for the first time with producers Bill Stevenson (*Descendents*, *Black Flag*) and Jason Livermore (*Rise Against*, *NOFX*).

Although the album is being released on the band's own ADTR Records (like 2013's *Common Courtesy*), this record marks their first distribution deal with Epitaph and is the first time they've worked with Grammy winner Andy Wallace (*Foo Fighters*, *Slayer*).

"We completely changed the way we wrote, recorded and mixed this album," says vocalist McKinnon. "It was one of the most unique recording experiences we've ever had."

"We rented a cabin in the Colorado mountains and just wrote with the five of us together in a room, which was the polar

opposite of the last three albums we've made. We just let things happen organically and in the moment."

"I think it forever changed the way we make music. And working with Bill was an awesome experience. He was a bit hard to read at first, so I think we subconsciously pushed ourselves harder to try to impress him. As a result, we gave this album everything we had."

Kinetic

Recorded at Stevenson's Fort Collins-based Blasting Room Studios, *Bad Vibrations* channels the kinetic energy that found A Day To Remember named "The Best Live Band Of 2013" by Alternative Press.

The band decided to forgo digitally driven production and focus on live recording. "These days it seems like a lot of heavy sounding music is heading more and more in a digital direction," says McKinnon. "That's not necessarily a bad thing but we wanted to go the opposite way and make something that's aggressive but has more of a natural flow and feel to it."

Ultimately, McKinnon says that this particular album-making process breathed new life into the band. He adds: "Breaking out of our comfort zone and working in a less controlled way, we ended up making something that feels good to everyone, and we can't wait to go out and tour on it."

By powering *Bad Vibrations* with so much raw passion, A Day To Remember ultimately deliver some of their most emotionally intense material to date.

"I'm singing about the things that are frustrating me," says McKinnon. "But at some point there's an arc within the song. It's almost like I'm giving advice to another person about whatever I'm struggling with, but I think I'm really just trying to give that advice to myself."

The band tackles duplicity and deception (on the frenzied 'Same About You'), the destructive nature of judgmental behaviour (on 'Justified', a track shot through with soaring harmonies and sprawling guitar work), addiction (on the darkly charged 'Reassemble'), and friendship poisoned by unchecked ego (on 'Bullfight', a track with a classic-punk chorus).



Energetic frontman Jeremy McKinnon



McKinnon delivers emotional material in *Bad Vibrations*

Check out listings in **the ticket** in Friday's Express & Star

The Pretty Reckless return with album number three



New York rock band The Pretty Reckless, fronted by Taylor Momsen, are back with recent album Who You Selling For and a Birmingham gig

AMERICAN rock band The Pretty Reckless, fronted by former Gossip Girl actress Taylor Momsen, are in concert in Birmingham tomorrow (Friday), following the release of third studio album Who You Selling For.

Released in October, that album was the follow-up to Going to Hell, which included one of the biggest rock songs of 2014, Heaven Knows.

The latest album features songs with bluesy undertones, written by singer-guitarist Momsen and lead guitarist Ben Phillips, and is pro-

duced by the band's longtime collaborator Kato Khandwala, who has also worked with Blondie, Paramore and My Chemical Romance.

Formed in 2009, The Pretty Reckless released their debut album Light Me Up in 2010 scoring legions of fans worldwide, but it was their second album Going to Hell that really established the band, and Momsen as a creditable rock singer as well as actress and model.

Despite feeling the physical and emotional demands from their epic two-year tour support-

ing Going to Hell, Momsen and Phillips jumped right into writing the songs for the new album.

"We had so much we wanted to say, it was like shaking a can of soda on tour and then when we started writing we cracked the seal," says Momsen. "The touring life is very isolating. You look at the world through a bus or airplane window. But music is the healing factor. It saved us – again."

The Pretty Reckless are at Birmingham's O2 Institute, Digbeth, doors open 6.30pm.

The Pretty Reckless are at Birmingham's O2 Institute, Digbeth, doors open 6.30pm.



Voice of rock at the Robin

CANNOCK rock star Glenn Hughes has spoken of his excitement at coming back to the UK this month for a tour.

The legendary singer and bassist, who is currently in the studio in LA recording a new studio album with rock supergroup Black Country Communion, has released an official statement to his fans about touring the UK this month.

He cancelled a similar tour which was set to take place last November just weeks before it started after a fall-out with support band Living Colour, who removed themselves from the bill at short notice.

Hughes will return to the Black Country on Monday night for a show at Bilston's Robin 2.

The California-based rocker said: "I'm thrilled to be coming over to tour the UK and Europe this month and February."

"My band will now be a four piece. On guitar is Soren Andersen, on drums Pontus Engborg, and on keyboards Jay Boe. Song selections will be a mix from my new album Resonate, and from my well of historic songs through the decades."

"This tour is all about rock and what it means to us all, including my band, and to my fans and friends. Let's get 2017 going with a killer night for rock lovers, movers and shakers. See you down the front."

Previously Hughes has fronted Deep Purple, Trapeze and more recently supergroup Black Country Communion. He was also the voice of The KLF's hit What Time Is Love?

Hughes will be supported by Walsall band Stone Broken. Tickets cost £22.50 in advance or £24.50 on the door. Contact 01902 401 211 or visit www.therobin.co.uk

Stray are celebrating 50 years together with gig

ROCK four-piece Stray are celebrating 50 years together with a gig at the Robin 2 in Bilston on Sunday.

Four school friends formed the group in London in 1966, releasing their first album in 1970 and have been performing ever since. Still led by guitarist Del Bromham, the band play a melodic mix of hard rock and heavy blues.

The Superska play the venue tomorrow (Friday), there is a charity gig by The Busby Babes on Saturday and Glenn Hughes plays on Monday (see above).

On Tuesday there is blues from Lil' Jimmy Reed, and more blues from Eric Sardinas on Wednesday, and then its jump 'n' jive 1940s and '50s R&B from King Pleasure & The Biscuit Boys, supported by Ricky Cool and The In Crowd, at the Mount Pleasant venue on Thursday.

Tributes taking over with feast of nostalgia

THE New Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham is preparing for soundalikes next weekend when it holds three consecutive tribute concerts, starting on Thursday The Bowie Experience.

The two-hour concert celebrates the music of David Bowie, who would have been 70 last week if not for his death a year ago. The band is fronted by Laurence Knight in costume in several Bowie guises.

On January 27 Someone Like You features the Adele songbook, performed in concert by Kate Markham. The Carpenters Story on January 28 features Claire Furley as Karen Carpenter, the velvet-voiced 1970s singer who performed in The Carpenters with her brother Richard.

Also on Saturday, January 28, the Robin 2 in Bilston presents the ultimate 70s night out with Bootleg Abba and Bee Gees Fever.

Orchestra play score alongside Blood epic

THE 50-piece London Contemporary Orchestra will be performing the score by Jonny Greenwood for Oscar-winning movie There Will Be Blood live alongside a screening of the epic at Symphony Hall, Birmingham, on Sunday, February 5.

The soundtrack, by the Oxford-born guitarist and keyboardist from acclaimed experimental rock band Radiohead, added to the success of director Paul Thomas Anderson's drama set during the California oil boom of the early 1900s.

Described as a 'masterpiece' by some critics, the film won Academy Awards for actor Daniel Day-Lewis and cinematographer Robert Elswit.

Tickets cost from £28 to £48 for the 7pm performance. See www.thsh.co.uk or call 0121 780 4949.

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Sat 11 Feb	Tower of London & Canterbury	£99
Sat 18 Feb	Torquay & Bath	£59
Sat 18 Feb	Emmerdale Studio Experience	£99

Explore Europe

Explore the best of Europe....

4/5/7/14 DAY EUROPEAN BREAKS

Fri 27 Jan	4 Disneyland Spectacular at the Kyriad	£279
Sun 5 Feb	7 Rome and Taste of Italy (2 evening meals)	£289
Mon 6 Feb	4 Disneyland Spectacular of the B&B Hotel	£269
Mon 6 Feb	4 Ostend Special Breakaway	£119
Mon 6 Feb	5 Three Counties Inclusive Special	£149
Fri 10 Feb	4 Disneyland Spectacular of Dream Castle	£339
Fri 10 Feb	7 Lemon Festival & Italian Riviera Inclusive	£339
Fri 10 Feb	4 Paris Weekend Superdeal	£149
Fri 10 Feb	7 Venice Carnival Spectacular (2 evening meals)	£299
Sun 13 Feb	5 Amsterdam, Cologne & Valkenburg	£239
Sun 19 Feb	7 Lake Garda & Venice All-Inclusive	£339
Sun 19 Feb	14 Spring Sunshine on the Costa Brava Coast	£499
Mon 20 Feb	4 Disneyland Paris at the Magic Circus	£349
Mon 20 Feb	5 Ostend All Inclusive	£229

Disneyland® Paris 4 DAY

B&B Hotel

Fri 10 February	£269
Fri 24 February	£279
Children (all dates)	£99
What's included?	

- Coach travel with reserved seating throughout
- Three nights dinner, bed & continental breakfast at the B&B Hotel.
- Two days admission to Disneyland Park & Walt Disney Studios Park
- Free shuttle bus to and from the Disney parks

SHOWTIME

With inclusive admission to top shows & acts in 2017!

Good Mourning Mrs Brown 2 DAY

- Live Tour!

Sat 1 July	£139
What's included?	

- Coach travel with reserved seating
- One night dinner, bed & breakfast at our select hotel
- Visit to York
- Admission to Good Mourning Mrs Brown at First Direct Arena, Leeds. Age 16+

2 DAY SHOWTIME BREAKS

Fri 3 Feb	Metown's Greatest Hits - Live in Manchester	£89
Sat 4 Feb	London & Star Wars Identities at the O2	£99
Sat 4 Feb	Showdaddywaddy - Live in Manchester	£99
Sat 4 Feb	Stand By Me - The Ben E King Revue	£99
Sat 4 Feb	Strictly Come Dancing - The Live Tour!	£119
Sat 11 Jan	The Story of The Bee Gees	£89
Wed 15 Feb	Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom & Blackpool Funtime	£79
Sat 18 Feb	Blood Brothers & Liverpool Special	£99
Sat 18 Feb	Motown the Musical - London Showtime	£139
Sat 18 Feb	School of Rock - London Showtime	£139
Fri 24 Feb	Paul Carrack - Live in Concert	£99
Sat 25 Feb	Cirque Du Soleil - Spectacular!	£139
Sat 25 Feb	Les Misérables - London Showtime	£149
Sat 25 Feb	Phantom of the Opera - London Showtime	£139
Sat 25 Feb	Sister Act & Histories York	£99

Special Events

Enjoy admission to sensational Special Events.

2 DAY SPECIAL EVENTS BREAKS

Sat 4 Feb	Liverpool & Hobbycraft - Live	£69
Sat 25 Feb	Leeds and York Jorvik Viking Festival	£79
Sat 25 Feb	London Spectacular & The Classic Car Show	£119
Sat 18 Mar	Ramsgate Chocolate Festival & The Lakes	£79
Sat 25 Mar	Manchester Bike Show & Liverpool	£89
Sat 1 Apr	Victoria of Hartwood House	£89
Sat 15 Apr	London & the Tall Ships Regatta Easter Special	£119
Sat 22 Apr	Cotswolds Wartime 1940's Special	£89
Sat 22 Apr	Skipton Market & Harrogate Flower Show	£99
Tue 25 Apr	Gino's Italian Escape - Live!	£99
Sat 6 May	The London Motor Show	£99
Sat 13 May	Abingdon Airshow & Historic Bath	£99
Sat 13 May	Hobbycrafts, Stitch & Sew - Live!	£79
Sat 10 Jun	Ideal Home Show & Liverpool	£79
Sat 24 Jun	Harlow Carr Flower Show	£99

3 DAY

Torquay Double Bill Tribute

Fri 24 February	£99 ELTON JOHN/ROD STEWART
Fri 17 March	£99 AMY WINEHOUSE/ADELE
What's included?	

- Coach travel with reserved seating
- Two nights dinner, bed & breakfast at the Seaside Hotel, Torquay
- Two quality tribute acts, one each evening
- '2 for 1' drinks at the bar for three hours each evening
- Visit to Clevedon Pier and Gloucester Historic Docks

Family Fun

Great breaks for all the family!

LEGOLAND® Spectacular 2 DAY

Inclusive

Sat 18 March	£99	Sat 22 July	£119
Sat 15 April	£119	Sat 5 August	£119
Sat 27 May	£119	Sat 19 August	£119
Sat 24 June	£119	Sat 23 September	£99

What's included?

- Coach travel with reserved seating
- One night bed & breakfast at our select hotel
- Included admission to LEGOLAND® on both days.

2 DAY FAMILY FUN BREAKS

Sat 28 Jan	Harry Potter Studio Tour	£119
Thu 16 Feb	Harry Potter Studio Tour	£119
Sat 18 Feb	Legoland Discovery & Blackpool funtime	£79
Sat 18 Feb	Polar Bears, Penguins & Kingdom of Ice	£99
Sat 18 Feb	Harry Potter Studio Tour	£119
Thu 6 April	Harry Potter Studio Tour	£119
Sat 15 Apr	Polar Bears, Penguins & Kingdom of Ice	£99
Sat 22 Apr	Longleat Safari Park, Jungle Cruise & Windsor	£99
Sat 22 Apr	Legoland Discovery & Blackpool funtime	£79
Sat 22 Apr	Polar Bears, Penguins & Kingdom of Ice	£99
Sat 27 May	Longleat Safari Park, Jungle Cruise & Windsor	£99
Sat 3 Jun	Legoland Discovery & Blackpool funtime	£79
Sat 17 Jun	Polar Bears, Penguins & Kingdom of Ice	£99
Sat 24 Jun	Longleat Safari Park, Jungle Cruise & Windsor	£99

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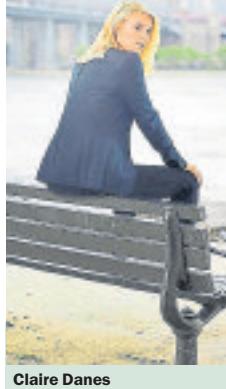
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NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

CHOICE

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. 7.35 Match of the Day. (R) 8.00 The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **2.15** Flora in (R) **3.15** Escape to the Country. (R) **4.15** Lifeline. **4.25** Songs of Praise. **5.00** Spy in the Wild. (R) **6.00** BBC News. **6.20** Regional Programme. **6.30** Countryfile. The latest rural developments, including reports on issues affecting country communities and insights into the life of the modern farmer. Including weather for the week ahead. **7.30** Still Open All Hours. Granville tries to sell a huge wheel of cheese which is long past its sell by date. Leroy gets stuck delivering goods by bicycle and demands his father invest in a van. **8.00** Call the Midwife. New series. The midwives return home after their trip to South Africa, to find Nonnatus House has come under new management. The formidable Sister Ursula (Harriet Walter) has taken charge and introduced some drastic changes to the way the clinic is run, which Sister Julienne, bound by her vow of obedience, is powerless to oppose. The midwives come to the aid of a victim of domestic violence whose husband is about to be released from prison, and who risks losing everything if she seeks a divorce. Sister Mary Cynthia suffers further anxiety attacks, and Raya receives distressing news about her father. **9.00** Apple Tree Yard. New series. Thriller based on Louise Doughty's novel about a scientist who has an affair that leads to a violent incident threatening everything she holds dear. With Emily Watson. **10.00** BBC News. **10.20** Regional Programme. **10.30** Match of the Day 2. Mark Chapman reviews the day's Premier League action, which featured Southampton v Leicester City, Arsenal v Burnley and Chelsea v Hull City. **11.40** A Question of Sport. (R) **12.10** The Celebrity Apprentice USA. **1.35** Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.40** BBC News.



Claire Danes

Homeland (Channel 4, 9pm)

New series, the espionage drama returns, picking up events several months after the climax of season five, which saw a terrorist attack in Berlin being thwarted, and follows the characters through the handover process following a presidential election. Carrie returns to the US with Franny to work with a foundation that provides aid to the Muslim community. Dar and Saul brief the newly elected President as the process of transferring power gets underway, while Quinn struggles to adapt to his new circumstances. Claire Danes, Elizabeth Marvel, Rupert Friend and F Murray Abraham star.

BBC2

6.15 Coast. (R) **7.15** A to Z of TV Gardening. **8.00** An Island Parish: Anguilla. (R) **8.30** The Edible Garden. (R) **9.00** Countryfile. (R) **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.30** Talking Smoker. **12.15** The Dads' Live Show. **1.00** Live Snooker. Hazel Irvine presents coverage of the opening eight frames of the final from Alexandra Palace, London, where the best-of-19-frames match takes place. **5.15** Tennis: Australian Open Highlights. **6.15** Ski Sunday. Coverage of the men's downhill on the Hahnenkamm in Kitzbuhel, Austria, and the women's downhill in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. Plus, an interview with innovative snowboarder Billy Morgan, who continues to push the boundaries in freestyle. **7.00** Live Snooker: The Masters. Hazel Irvine presents concluding coverage of the final from Alexandra Palace, London, where a maximum of 11 frames will be played to decide this year's champion. Last year's showpiece match was a decidedly one-sided affair, with Ronnie O'Sullivan claiming a 10-1 victory over Barry Hawkins to win the competition for a record-equaling sixth time, putting him level with Stephen Hendry. Subsequent programmes are subject to change. **11.00** QI XL. Johnny Vegas, Ronni Ancona and Alan Carr join regular panelist Alan Davies and host Sandi Toksvig to contemplate the theme "naval navigation" in this extended episode. **11.45** Film: Good. (2008) A literary professor in 1930s Germany finds his work praised by the fast-rising Nazi party, and begins to enjoy the privileges that come with the accolade. As his prosperity grows, he becomes increasingly morally compromised, and as the true nature of Nazi ideology becomes clear, he tries to protect his Jewish psychiatrist from the state. Drama, with Viggo Mortensen, Jason Isaacs and Jodie Whittaker. **1.15** Sign Zone. Question Time. Topical debate from Peterborough, chaired by David Dimbleby. (R) **2.15** Holy City. Sacha becomes suspicious about Essie and Raf's relationship, and Fletcher fights to save his friend Artem's life when the old gambler returns to the Acute Assessment Unit. (R) **3.15** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.30** The Edible Garden. (R) **7.00** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.30** Talking Smoker. **12.15** The Dads' Live Show. **1.00** Live Snooker. Hazel Irvine presents coverage of the opening eight frames of the final from Alexandra Palace, London, where the best-of-19-frames match takes place. **5.15** Tennis: Australian Open Highlights. **6.15** Ski Sunday. Coverage of the men's downhill on the Hahnenkamm in Kitzbuhel, Austria, and the women's downhill in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. Plus, an interview with innovative snowboarder Billy Morgan, who continues to push the boundaries in freestyle. **7.00** Live Snooker: The Masters. Hazel Irvine presents concluding coverage of the final from Alexandra Palace, London, where a maximum of 11 frames will be played to decide this year's champion. Last year's showpiece match was a decidedly one-sided affair, with Ronnie O'Sullivan claiming a 10-1 victory over Barry Hawkins to win the competition for a record-equaling sixth time, putting him level with Stephen Hendry. Subsequent programmes are subject to change. **11.00** QI XL. Johnny Vegas, Ronni Ancona and Alan Carr join regular panelist Alan Davies and host Sandi Toksvig to contemplate the theme "naval navigation" in this extended episode. **11.45** Film: Good. (2008) A literary professor in 1930s Germany finds his work praised by the fast-rising Nazi party, and begins to enjoy the privileges that come with the accolade. As his prosperity grows, he becomes increasingly morally compromised, and as the true nature of Nazi ideology becomes clear, he tries to protect his Jewish psychiatrist from the state. Drama, with Viggo Mortensen, Jason Isaacs and Jodie Whittaker. **1.15** Sign Zone. Question Time. Topical debate from Peterborough, chaired by David Dimbleby. (R) **2.15** Holy City. Sacha becomes suspicious about Essie and Raf's relationship, and Fletcher fights to save his friend Artem's life when the old gambler returns to the Acute Assessment Unit. (R) **3.15** This Is BBC Two.

CHANNEL 4

6.15 The King of Queens. (R) **6.45** The King of Queens. (R) **7.10** Everybody Loves Raymond. **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Still Brunch. **12.30** The Simpsons. (R) **1.00** The Simpsons. (R) **2.00** Tooth Fairy. (2010) Family comedy, starring Dwayne Johnson. **3.30** A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun. **4.15** Location, Location, Location. (R) **5.20** Channel 4 News. **5.50** Film: The Day After Tomorrow. (2004) A climatologist races across America to rescue his son as freak weather conditions cause devastation around the world. Disaster thriller, starring Jake Gyllenhaal and Dennis Quaid. Edited for language and violence. **8.00** Walking the Americas. Levison Wood travels along a string of volcanoes in Nicaragua as he makes his way to Costa Rica, and climbs to the top of an active volcano referred to as the Mouth of Hell. He also meets fishermen who live on an island in Central America's largest lake, visits a camp for migrants trying to reach the US, and attempts to climb the highest mountain on his route. **9.00** Homeland. New series. Carrie returns to the US with Franny to work as an advocate for Muslim Americans, while Dar and Saul brief President-elect Keane. Claire Danes stars. **10.05** Film: Trainspotting. (1996) A heroin addict makes a series of attempts to kick the habit, but the grind of everyday life and a circle of similarly destructive friends keep dragging him back to his old ways. Following a near-fatal overdose, he comes to the realisation that the only way to put his life in order is to rid himself of his friends – which is easier said than done. Danny Boyle's drama based on Irvine Welsh's novel, starring Ewan McGregor, Robert Carlyle and Ewen Bremner. **11.55** The 90s: Ten Years That Changed the World. Kathy Burke narrates this look back at the 1990s revolution in British music, fashion, film, sport and media, as told by the people who made it happen. (R) **1.20** How to Lose Weight Well. (R) **2.15** Millionaires' Mansions: Designing Britain's Most Exclusive Homes. (R) **3.10** The Autistic Gardner. (R) **4.05** Kirstie's Fill Your House for Free. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Milkshake! Monkey. **6.05** Milkshake!: Bob Box. (R) **6.10** Peppa Pig. **6.15** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **6.25** Bob the Builder. (R) **6.45** Wanda & Allen. (R) **6.50** Zack and Quack. (R) **7.00** The Wiggles. (R) **7.05** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.15** Pip Ahoy. (R) **7.30** Little Princess. (R) **7.40** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.55** Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.25** Noddy in Toyland. (R) **8.40** Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **8.55** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.25** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.35** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.45** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.55** The Fairly OddParents. (R) **10.30** Football on 5: The Championship. (R) **11.20** Pig on 5: Goal Rush. (R) **11.55** Funniest Fails. Falls & Flips. (R) **12.20** Brides Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R) **1.20** Film: Kangaroo Jack. (2003) Comedy, starring Jerry O'Connell and Anthony Anderson. **3.00** Film: George of the Jungle. (1997) **4.45** Film: Herbie: Fully Loaded. (2005) **6.30** Dads Make You Laugh Out Loud. **7.30** The Adele Story. Documentary charting the remarkable career trajectory of Adele Adkins, the pop soul singer who rose from humble beginnings in Tottenham to become one of the biggest stars of the modern era. Now big enough to warrant going by her forename only, Adele's interest in music was encouraged by her mother from an early age. Winning a place at the Brit School in Croydon, Adele first shot into the public eye when her friend uploaded a demo to MySpace in 2006, and by the time she graduated, the singer had already secured a record deal. What followed were three hugely successful albums, 19, 21 and 25, each of which surpassed the last in terms of critical acclaim and sales figures. Adele also scored an Oscar in 2013 for her song Skyfall, which featured as the theme of the James Bond film of the same name. (R) **8.55** 5 News Weekend. **9.00** Celebrity Big Brother. The ups and downs of life in the BB house as friendships and alliances are made, battle lines are drawn and arguments erupt. **10.00** Celebrity Butched Up Bodies. **11.05** Film: Just Go with It. (2011) Romantic comedy, starring Adam Sandler and Jennifer Aniston. **1.10** SuperCasino. **3.10** Film: Universal Soldier. (1992) **4.50** Divine Designs. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four **7.00** David Starkey's Music & Monarchy **8.00** Sword, Musket & Machine Gun: Britain's Armed History **9.00** Titanic's Tragic Twin: the Britannic Disaster **10.00** Hidden Killers of the Post-War Home **11.00** Horizon: What's Wrong with Our Water? **12.00** Play It Loud: The Story of the Marshall Amp **1.30** Sound of Musicals **2.00** Brand **2.00** Lost Kingdoms of Central America **3.00** Titanic's Tragic Twin: The Britannic Disaster **4.00** Close **ITV2** **3.00** Film: Looney Tunes: Back in Action (2003) **4.05** FYI Daily **4.10** FYI Daily **5.10** Film: Looney Tunes: On the Action (2003) **4.45** Film: Nameless McPhee **6.00** Film: The Big Bang (2010) **6.55** Film: The Hobbit: Desolation of Smaug (2013) **7.55** FYI Daily **8.00** Film: The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug (2013) **10.00** Family Guy **11.55** American Dad! **12.55** The Cleveland Show **1.50** Totally Bonkers **Guinness World Records 2.20** Teleshopping **4.50** ITV3 **1.50** Sherlock Holmes: The Hound of the Baskervilles **4.45** Agatha Christie's Marple **6.00** Midsomer Murders **8.00** This Time Next Year **9.00** Tonight at the London Palladium **10.00** Birds of a Feather **10.35** Film: Wimbledon (2004) **11.35** FYI Daily **11.40** Film: Wimbledon (2004) **12.15** Film: Road (2014) **1.15** FYI Daily **1.20** Film: Road (2014) **2.20** Tommy Cooper **2.45** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping **4** **5.10** Film: The Man from the Alamo (1953) **6.10** FYI Daily **6.15** Film: The Man from the Alamo (1953) **6.50** Mr Bean **8.00** Film: Police Academy 5: Assignment Miami Beach (1988) **9.10** FYI Daily **9.15** Film: Police Academy 5: Assignment Miami Beach (1988) **10.00** Film: The Bank Job (2008) **11.00** FYI Daily **11.05** Film: The Bank Job (2008) **12.15** Film: Road (2014) **1.20** Film: Road (2014) **2.20** Tommy Cooper **2.45** ITV4 Nightscreen **5** **1.35** The Goldbergs **4.30** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** Film: Colombiana (2011) **11.05** Tattoo Fixers **12.10** Virtually Famous **1.05** Gogglebox **1.50** The Goldbergs **2.40** Rude Tube **Film4** **1.00** Short Circuit (1986) **3.05** The House of Magic (2013) **4.45** Time Bandits (1981) **7.00** The Way Way Back (2013) **9.00** The Grand Budapest Hotel (2014) **11.05** Emery at the Gates (2001)

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27th-3rd Mar	Cornwall All incl (Free bar & 8-Poster)	£309.50	7th-8th	National Stud Tour, Newmarket	£229.50
8th-9th	Kew Gardens & Kensington Palace	£239.50	8th-9th	Windsor Castle	£139.50
10th-14th	Llandudno & Snowdonia	£260.50	11th-12th	Music of Bond at the Royal Albert Hall	£155.00
13th-17th	Sidmouth & Jurassic Coast	£339.50	14th-17th	Tall Ships Festival at Greenwich	£248.00
18th-19th	Tower of London & Hampton Court	£249.50	15th-16th	Beachley Park & Mayhew	£136.00
20th-24th	Bournemouth	£239.50	21st-23rd	York, Lincoln & Castle Howard	£165.00
25th-26th	Mother's Day Florimania Weekend	£219.50	22nd-27th	Emmerdale "This Town"	£139.50
27th-31st	Hampton, York & Yorkshire Dales	£290.50	28th-29th	Ireland's Secret Gardens, wall & nail	£499.50
31st-1st Feb	Eastbourne & South Downs	£215.00	26th-27th	Boerie Northumbria Country	£269.50
1st-2nd Mar	Chichester / Chawfhill & Blenheim	£199.50	30-1st Mar	Only Fools & 3 Courses	£139.00

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MONDAY
Too Close To Kill, Channel 5, 3.15pm
Two best friends go their separate ways for the first time when one gets into the most revered sorority on campus, but matters soon take a fatal turn when one of them is murdered. Thriller, starring Greer Grammer, Chloe Babcock and Steve Bacic. (2016)

TUESDAY
Stolen Child, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A couple who have tried unsuccessfully to conceive resort to adopting a baby from Eastern Europe. However, their newfound happiness is shattered when they discover the disturbing series of events that brought the child into their lives. Drama, starring Emmanuelle Vaugier and Corbin Bernsen. (2012)



Insidious, Friday, Channel 4, 12.50am

WEDNESDAY

The Others, Channel 4, 1.30am
A woman awaits the return of her husband from the Second World War while struggling to care for her son and daughter. Both children suffer a violent reaction when exposed to daylight, forcing her to keep much of their isolated home on the island of Jersey shrouded in gloom. When the pair claim to see strangers in the house, their terrified mother begins to suspect that the souls of the dead are stalking the halls. Period supernatural thriller, starring Nicole Kidman. (2001)

THURSDAY

Badge of Betrayal, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A woman discovers her supposedly dead son is still alive, his demise having been faked by her ex-husband as part of an elaborate plot to destroy her life. However, finding the evidence to prove her story turns out to be a difficult challenge. Thriller, starring Julie Benz and Matthew Kevin Anderson. (2014)

FRIDAY

Insidious, Channel 4, 12.50am
A family experience strange events in their house and become convinced it is haunted. However, after moving on, they find the dark forces have followed them and when their son mysteriously falls into a coma, they must find a way to get rid of the paranormal entities tormenting them. Horror, starring Patrick Wilson and Rose Byrne. (2010)

The stars are out to shine in the capital

It's January, the start of a new year, a time, perhaps, to look back at what happened during the previous 12 months.

That's certainly the case in the showbiz world.

During the next few weeks, we'll be inundated with awards ceremonies. The Golden Globes have already taken place, Bafta's film event appears on February 12, with the Oscars happening a fortnight later.

But our focus, for now, will be on the National Television Awards (or NTAs, for short). They're a little bit special because they're voted for by the public, ie the audience sat at home watching programmes for pleasure, rather than stuffy critics who are paid for their opinions.

That fact also makes them mean more to the winners too – after all, if the fans have voted for them, then they must be doing something right.

The past 12 months have certainly been very special TV-wise, with lots of highlights to choose from – long gone are the days when viewers were left

bemoaning that there was nothing on the box tonight!

The Great British Bake Off proved to be hugely popular, and viewers were fixed to their screens as Candice Brown was crowned the winner. But it was a bittersweet moment as it was revealed that the 2016 run would be the last to appear on the BBC – controversially, it will make its debut on Channel 4 this year, without presenters Mel Giedroyc and Sue Perkins, and judge Mary Berry, although Paul Hollywood had opted to stick with the show.

Interestingly, the programme (Best Challenge Show), Mel and Sue (TV Presenter), and Mary (TV Judge) are all up for NTAs, but Paul is not...

While Mary faces fierce competition from fellow veteran Len Goodman, who has retired from Strictly Come Dancing, Mel and Sue must beat the mighty Ant and Dec if they're to triumph – and that's no mean feat.

One of the most hotly contested categories will be Drama Performance, where Cillian Murphy (Peaky Blinders), Jenna Coleman

(Victoria), Sarah Lancashire (Happy Valley) and recent Golden Globe winner Tom Hiddleston (The Night Manager) will vie for the title.

All of their series are also in the running for awards, in either the Drama or Period Drama sections.

Other big names and shows set to feature on the night are Cold Feet, Casualty, Coronation Street, David Walliams, Simon Cowell and Game of Thrones.

Dermot O'Leary will host the event live from London's O2 arena, while Queen of the Jungle Scarlet Moffatt takes charge of the ceremony's social media feeds, delivering all the latest backstage gossip in the process.

"I've never been to an awards ceremony before," says Scarlett. "I can't believe the first one I'm attending is as part of the actual NTA team working alongside Dermot, the master of live TV; it's going to be such an amazing experience."

"To top it off, my Dad gets to be my plus one and walk me down my first ever red carpet. What more can a girl ask for?"

The National Television Awards 2017, Wednesday, ITV, 7.30pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Winterwatch 2017
BBC2, 8pm
New series. Chris Packham, Michaela Strachan and Martin Hughes-Games return to RSPB Arne in Dorset as they present from their base on Poole Harbour, which is officially the most biodiverse region in the UK, with more species of animals and plants within 10 miles of Wareham than anywhere else in the country. Gillian Burke examines military pillboxes in Studland to explore the lives of hibernating butterflies in winter, while Martin tries to understand the harbour's appeal for waders, particularly avocets, and has an incredible revelation.

TUESDAY
Brainwashing Stacey
BBC1, 10.45pm
Stacey Dooley travels to southern California to meet Jeff White, an anti-abortion campaigner who runs a group entitled Survivors of the Abortion Holocaust. He's been arrested more than 100 times for leading public protests against pregnancy terminations, and runs so-called Survivors Pro-Life Training Camps, in which children from all over America are invited to take part in summer camps which, according to its website, aims to educate and equip young activists who are willing to be used by God to defend those unjustly sentenced to death. Dooley joins some of the youngsters on field trips which seem to involve disrupting what goes on at abortion clinics, and hears why they feel that White's message is one that should be heard and heeded.

WEDNESDAY
Who Do You Think You Are?
BBC1, 8pm

As the 'last of the McKellens', the award-winning actor and civil rights champion Sir Ian McKellen admits to a degree of melancholy as he delves into his family history, but the results pay off greatly. On his journey back through his family history, he discovers one of his ancestors was a Victorian political activist, and another relative was also linked to the theatre. Finally, Ian learns that previous generations of his family have a surprising link to an ancient druidical landmark in the Lake District.

Hospital
BBC2, 9pm
The spotlight moves to the neurological ward, where crane driver Phil is one of the most urgent cases. After collapsing at work he is becoming increasingly paralysed, and Kevin O'Neill, one of the country's leading brain surgeons, wants to remove the fast-growing brain tumour causing Phil's condition. It's a life-threatening operation, and time is of the essence – but securing theatre time in a hospital at bursting point proves to be far from simple.

But waiting times could be a thing of the past if revolutionary new treatments that don't involve invasive brain surgery prove to be successful. Consultant neurologist Dr Peter Bain is at the forefront of this work, and talks viewers through how using MRI-focussed ultrasound waves could replace knives and drills.

THURSDAY
Spy in the Wild
BBC1, 8pm
The undercover cameras reveal how animals rely upon each other for a range of activities. Arctic wolves group together to survive in one of the harshest landscapes on earth, a band of hungry mongoose groom warthogs for tasty morsels – before turning

their attention to Spy Warthog – and fish help clean hippo's bodies, as well as providing a unique dental service. Meanwhile, crocodiles and dikdik birds take part in a mutual neighbourhood watch against hungry prowling monitor lizards, and Spy Rattlesnake captures how prairie dogs and burrowing owls use their language skills to tell the rest of their community of approaching danger.

FRIDAY
Eurovision: You Decide
BBC2, 7.30pm

It's now been 20 years since the UK won the Eurovision Song Contest – our last victory were Katrina and the Waves back in 1997 with Love Shine a Light. So that makes it all the more important that we find the right song to represent us this year, and the BBC are turning to the public to help with the search. Hosted by self-confessed Eurovision fan Mel Giedroyc from the Hammersmith Apollo, this live show sees six short-listed acts taking to the stage in the hopes of impressing the viewers and a jury of music professionals. The panel will offer feedback on the songs – and some suggestions as to how they might be staged – before their scores are combined with the public vote to determine who will be flying the flag for the UK in Ukraine this year.

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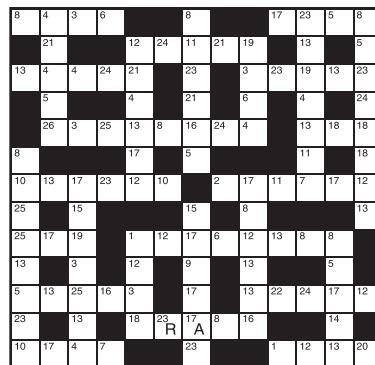
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Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
S	X	H	C	Q	O	F	J	V	W	Y	M	E	D	Z	R	A	B	G	K	L	N	T	U		

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

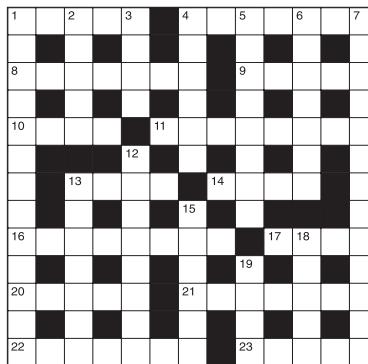
Cryptic Clues:

Across

- Everybody out of bed: this is the end! (3,2)
- Cut nail for madman (7)
- Take the lead in behaviour (7)
- He has a suit, of course (5)
- The majority of doctors get treatment first (4)
- Stagger from all quarters to see topical film (4-4)
- Charm by getting on stage? (8)
- Plunge into a drinking-den (4)
- At this point in the rehearsal (4)
- Current minister is absolutely right (8)
- Frank has nothing to writer (4)
- I break up game involving idol (5)
- Compunction about code (7)
- Try a leg in a big way (7)
- Entertain, as doctors do (5)

Down

- Obliging with lodgings, perhaps (13)
- Rows involve falsehoods about Norman, initially (5)
- Register pique when dues get dues this way (4)
- The French temporary home is hidden (6)
- Stagger from all quarters to see topical film (4-4)
- Counter beat (7)
- Complementary journalist (13)
- Get too many degrees for comfort? (8)
- Aver led race (7)
- Violent tale about a thousand (6)
- Clearing out of undesirables from group urgently needed (5)
- Give out time is up (4)



Quick Clues:

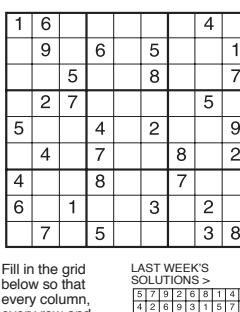
Across

- Force back (5)
- Quell (7)
- Scheme (7)
- Subject (5)
- Alleviate (4)
- Reduce (8)
- Act (4)
- Profit (4)
- Harshness (8)
- Labyrinth (4)
- Lighter (5)
- Tedious (7)
- Factor (7)
- Urge (5)

Down

- Blameworthy (13)
- Devout (5)
- Dregs (4)
- Preferably (6)
- Fatherly (8)
- Interpret (7)
- Extreme reticence (13)
- Respite (8)
- Separate (7)
- Rigorous (6)
- Without help (5)
- Neglect (4)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >
5 7 9 1 2 6 8 1 4 3
4 2 6 9 3 1 5 7 8
8 3 1 4 5 7 9 2
6 4 5 1 7 3 2 8 9
9 1 2 8 5 2 6 4 1
1 1 2 4 3 7 5 6 1
7 5 3 6 1 2 8 9 4
2 6 8 7 4 9 3 1 5
1 9 4 3 8 5 6 2 7

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 3 Spaghetti; 8 Ties; 9 Sovereign; 10 Roller; 11 Steed; 14 Listle; 15 Note; 16 Remained; 17 Sarcasm; 21 Lister; 24 Marital; 25 Unmarried; 26 Shrewd; 28 Plymouth; Down: 1 Starting; 2 Realistic; 4 Poor; 5 Guest; 6 Eleven; 7 Tags; 9 Sewer; 11 Samos; 12 Downtight; 13 Reasoning; 17 Thread; 19 Litany; 22 Earth; 23 Anil; 24 Mean. QUICK - Across: 3 Pseudonym; 8 Item; 9 Desultory; 10 Jester; 11 Tenet; 14 Nurse; 15 Tie; 16 Router; 18 Sarcasm; 20 Foulard; 24 Preach; 26 Reconcile; 28 Dawn; 29 Wrangling; Down: 1 Violinist; 2 Leisurely; 3 Seem; 4 Sheet; 5 Uncle; 6 Outset; 7 Yeti; 9 Defeat; 11 Timid; 12 Triumphal; 13 Pestilent; 17 Afire; 19 Disown; 22 Local; 23 Gear; 24 Plan.

Thinking space

Quiz

- What nationality was the painter Paul Klee?
- In which war were the Battles of Bull Run fought?
- Who won the 1994 Booker Prize?
- With which film did Marlene Dietrich win world fame?
- Whose wife was Helen of Troy?
- Of which Canadian province is Winnipeg the capital?
- In snooker, how many points is the brown ball worth?
- Which element has the symbol Na?
- What is a pond-skater?
- Which calendar includes the months Messidor and Thermidor?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Mallord; 2 Quango; 3 Jack Lemmon; 4 Trefoil; 5 Edward II; 6 1971; 7 Land of Nod; 8 Canada; 9 Dundee; 10 Orchids.

Niner: SPHERICAL

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

152785 gives a golf club,
34669 gives a second golf club,
297859833 gives an American golf course.



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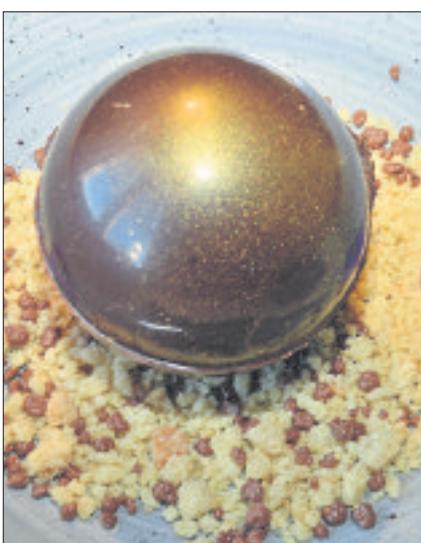
Golden globes – porcini mushroom arancini with lovage pesto



Warm and welcoming interior



Sound as a bell – The Bell in Belbroughton



As good as gold – melting golden chocolate bomb

Fantastic food sound as a Bell

MONDAY. Quite possibly the worst day of the week. Back to work when you've just enjoyed a lovely, lazy weekend.

A harsh dose of reality after two days bliss. But on a cheeky day off, while the rest of the country began their nine-to-five, it was nice to know a leisurely lunch was imminent.

It seemed like a good idea to revisit a pub that was a four-star find 18 months ago and had not long reopened after a revamp.

It was a good decision and standards remain high, another four stars, and there would've been an extra half had there not been a salmon and spinach debacle – to be revealed in due course.

So on a rainy Monday we ventured to the warm and welcoming pub. Gone were the countrified and formal furnishings replaced with a fancy and modern eclectic mix of looks. Bright velvet seats were coupled with animal prints and plain bold colours. Metal lantern lights and huge light shades hung above our heads.

Our waitress, Amy, was bright and bub-

Lisa Williams tucks in

bly and very helpful. The menu has a great deal of choice which should satisfy the fussiest of eaters. It also has a fair few imaginative dishes.

Stand-out options include something that's all the rage at the moment – a Wagyu burger; there's also a fisherman's platter starter including Sloe gin smoked salmon with salmon caviar and crayfish cocktail in Bloody Mary ketchup.

And for veggies there's a roasted winter vegetable tart stuffed with butternut squash, beetroot and Cropwell Bishop custard with a Stilton and walnut crumb; and also a buttermilk Southern Fried chicken stuffed with 'nduja sausage, with sweet potato fries, apple salad and preserved lemon aioli.

There are plenty of other simpler options too, sandwiches if you fancy a lighter bite, pizzas, pasta, salads and loads of meat and fish dishes.

We decided to go all out and have three courses. My other half went for the deep-fried Somerset Brie in panko breadcrumbs

with apricot and cumin chutney and I chose the Porcini Mushroom Arancini with lovage pesto.

My three golden orbs of arancini were delightful. The perfect crunch gave way to a heady mix of earthy mushrooms, salty and sticky mozzarella and al dente rice.

The Somerset Brie was a gooey splendour with stretchy strings of cheese. For mains he went for hearty man food, a steak, ale and Portobello mushroom pie with mashed potato, heritage carrots and seasonal greens.

Delicious

For me a fish dish from the specials menu, oven-baked salmon on a bed of tomato and garlic linguine with wilted spinach. A lovely shortcrust pastry pie appeared with a good helping of mashed potato and veg.

My salmon looked delicious with a gorgeously crispy skin but immediately I noticed the absence of the wilted spinach. I cut into the salmon and began to eat. There was a bone and then another. The fish was slightly slimy and when I poked in my fork further I could see it wasn't cooked.

Amy apologised profusely and with no

fuss she took away both meals. After a little wait they were returned to us. My salmon was back with spinach and cooked perfectly. The flavour of the tomato and the garlic in the linguine, which was cooked as pasta should be, was subtle but fresh and worked well with the fish.

The way the situation was handled and the quality of the fresh meals more than made up for the initial disappointment.

The pie was a success too, with the pastry getting top marks.

Despite feeling quite full we weren't leaving without sampling dessert. I wanted something lighter as I didn't want to end up feeling stuffed so went for the '200 calories or less' option.

This was strawberries and frozen natural yoghurt with honey ripple and rhubarb and rose flavour curd. It sounded refreshing and also the curd a little intriguing.

He went for something chocolatey, the melting golden chocolate bomb with caramel ice cream, chocolate popping candy and hot Devon cream toffee sauce.

We left with great big grins on our faces, full bellies and made a promise to return as soon as we possibly could!

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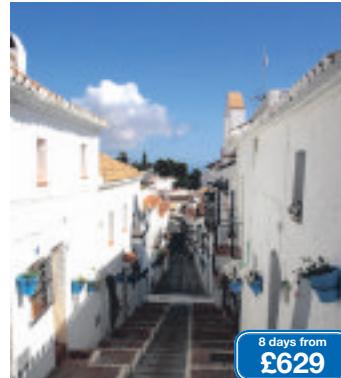
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PROPERTY

YOUR WEEKLY
GUIDE TO HOME
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Modern end-terrace property with open plan living space

A modern two-bedroomed end terraced property, 112, Richborough Drive, Dudley, features an open plan lounge/conservatory.

Also coming with a garden and off road parking, it is for sale through Skitts at £134,950.

Situated in an extremely popular residential area local to amenities including shops, schools and public transport services, this well maintained end terrace property has majority central heating and double glazing.

This end terrace residence is thought to be an ideal first time buy and viewing is recommended to avoid any disappointment, said a spokesman for the selling agent.

In more detail this property's accommodation is accessed via an entrance hall with a shoe cupboard.

The living room has stairs off and an electric fire within a surround.

Making the most of garden views, the conservatory comes with a ceiling light/fan, a central heating radiator, double glazed windows and double glazed doors to garden.

The kitchen has an inset single drainer stainless steel sink top with fitted base unit, further fitted base units with decorative laminate rolled edge work tops, a built-in oven with a four-ring electric hob and cooker hood, plumbing for a washing machine, a range of fitted wall cupboards, ceramic wall and floor tiles and a double glazed window. Upstairs is a landing with loft access and two bedrooms.

The bathroom has a white suite comprising a panelled bath with a shower fitting, a pedestal wash hand basin and a low flush WC, ceramic wall tiling, laminate flooring and an extractor fan.

The rear garden is enclosed and private from neighbouring properties.

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DUDLEY £134,950



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KEY FEATURES

Modern end terrace

2 bedrooms

Open plan lounge/conservatory

Majority double glazing/central heating

Garden & parking



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GOSPEL END VILLAGE, NR. Sedgley, Gospel End Road

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Offers in the region of £280,000



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New



SEDGLEY, Dingle View

Taylors Estate Agents are delighted to offer for sale this family home situated on the much sought after Dingle View in Sedgley. Benefiting from double glazing and central heating as well as corner position, this property also boasts porch, hall, living room, kitchen, THREE BEDROOMS, bathroom. Front and rear gardens, detached garage with driveway. VIEWING HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £179,500



LOWER GORNAL, Wallows Wood

A conscientiously maintained recently redecorated and repainted freehold gas centrally heated (recent boiler) and UPVC double glazed semi detached in popular cul-de-sac with walking distance to so many amenities. Accommodation provides entrance porch, reception hall, 24'6" through living/dining room (previously separate rooms), kitchen, utility, three bedrooms, upgraded bathroom with white suite, garage, garden. EPC Rating E SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £175,000



UPPER GORNAL, Pale Street

SPECIOUS, NEW BUILD, gas centrally heated, double glazed dormer style detached with flexible room arrangements. Conveniently situated, the accommodation comprises; hall, stylish BATHROOM, double bedroom, magnificent 'hub of the home' 19 ft living/dining room/kitchen. To first floor is a large 20'7" principal bedroom with shower room en-suite. Parking, gardens, distant views. EPC: SAP: B SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £171,950



LOWER GORNAL, Winscar Croft

Deceptively spacious and well appointed, this ideal family home is situated on a quiet cul-de-sac location in Lower Gornal, Dudley. Benefiting from central heating and double glazing this modern semi also boasts, entrance hall, fitted-kitchen, lounge-diner, conservatory, store room/utility, THREE BEDROOMS, ensuite to master, driveway, landscaped rear garden. EPC Rating D. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £169,950



New



GORNAL WOOD, Bank Road

EXCEPTIONALLY SPACIOUS! A modernised, gas centrally heated & uPVC double glazed traditional style end terrace offering further potential within walking distance of the village and all associated amenities and briefly comprises; entrance hallway (useful cellar), two living rooms, spacious 16'7" kitchen (with double French doors out to the garden). Three bedrooms, bathroom. Garden. EPC: E SEDGLEY

£134,950

Offers in the region of £130,000



WOODSETTON, Rosalind Avenue

This traditional semi-detached property is located in the much sought after area of Woodsetton and is offered with NO UPWARD CHAIN. With potential for improvement, this family home comprises of porch, entrance hallway, living room, dining room, kitchen, guest WC, THREE BEDROOMS, double glazing, enclosed rear garden, garage and parking. EPC: E SEDGLEY

Offers in excess of £119,950



PENSNETT, Swan Street

THIS RATHER ATTRACTIVE & VERY WELL PROPORTIONED, SEMI-DETACHED HOME comprises: Initial Hall, Pleasant Through Lounge, Fitted Kitchen, Two Generous First Floor Bedrooms, Well Appointed House Bathroom, Driveway & Attractive Rear Garden. EPC:

£114,950



WOMBOURNE, Bull Lane

A LARGE TWO BEDROOM GROUND FLOOR FLAT with a private rear garden and a LARGE CONSERVATORY EXTENSION, superbly placed close to countryside/fields within sought after Wombourne village, offering a GENEROUS layout of accommodation. EPC: D

New price

£99,950



New



DUDLEY, Laurel Road

TREMENDOUSLY IMPROVED OVER PAST 12 MONTHS - Conscientiously maintained gas centrally heated (recent combi boiler) and majority double glazed two double bedroom semi-detached comprising hallway, lounge, upgraded breakfast kitchen, lobby, store, separate WC and a large 'wrap around' UPVC double glazed/brick conservatory to side and rear. Two double bedrooms, reappointed bathroom with white suite, off road parking, neat garden. EPC: B SEDGLEY

£94,950

Offers in the region of £90,000



BRIERLEY HILL, Moor Street

THIS EXPENSIVELY APPOINTED & SPACIOUS, GROUND FLOOR, TWO BEDROOM APARTMENT comprises: Hall, Attractive Sitting Room, Fantastic Gloss Kitchen, Two Generous Bedrooms, Modern Bathroom, Allocated & Visitor Parking. Pretty Communal Grounds. EPC: D

£89,950



WOODSETTON, Regent Street

EXCEPTIONALLY WELL PRESENTED - Meticulously maintained gas centrally heated UPVC double or single glazed first floor flat in quiet 'backwater'. Tremendously enhanced by present vendors the accommodation provides; hall (incorporating caravan style seating which will convert into a temporary double bed), lounge (with living flame feature gas fire), refitted kitchen, double bedroom (with two double wardrobes), refitted shower room (former bathroom), shared grounds. EPC: C SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £70,000



DUDLEY, Attingham Drive

Beneftting from mains gas central heating this modern residence comprises wc, living room, kitchen, bathroom. TWO BEDROOMS. Property No. 69 offers the advantage of purchasing in conjunction with the Midland Heart Housing Assoc's SHARED OWNERSHIP SCHEME whereby the present vendors 50% SHARE is available to buy, the remaining 50% owned by the Housing Assoc who charge a fair market rental reviewed annually in line with any increase in the Retail Price Index. EPC: C SEDGLEY

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WOODSETTON, Calder Rise

Attractive, meticulously maintained, freehold, gas centrally heated, UPVC DOUBLE GLAZED detached in short favoured cul-de-sac. Comprising: Reception hall, fitted cloakroom, lounge, dining room, refitted kitchen with a fine range of units and integrated appliances, three bedrooms, re-appointed shower room (former bathroom) lengthly garage with extensive parking, landscaped 'low maintenance' rear garden. EPC: C SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £215,000



SEDGLEY, Northway

Imposing, spacious, conscientiously maintained, Freehold, gas centrally heated, double glazed semi-detached bungalow upon generous corner plot within walking distance of many day-to-day amenities comprising; porch, hall, kitchen, 18'3" living/dining room, two bedrooms (one with en-suite), reappointed bathroom, conservatory, secluded rear garden, garage, driveway. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £204,950



AMBLECOTE, Stamford Road

EXPENSIVELY APPOINTED, FABULOUS & DECEPTIVE, THREE BEDROOM, DETACHED HOME which comprises: Stylish through Lounge with Dining Area, Modern Kitchen, Three Bedrooms, Bathroom, Excellent Driveway, Large Carport, GARAGE & Attractive Garden! EPC D

£194,950



LOWER GORNAL, Mount Close

Good sized & conscientiously maintained semi-detached is enviably situated on Mount Close in the sought after Lower Gornal area of Dudley. Benefiting from central heating and double glazing this family home also boasts; entrance hall, living room, conservatory, kitchen, utility room, THREE BEDROOMS, family bathroom with separate W/C, landscaped rear garden and driveway to front. EPC: C SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £165,000



UPPER GORNAL, The Paddock

Gas centrally heated UPVC double glazed traditional style semi set at head of cul-de-sac (just off Clarence Street) this much improved home comprises entrance porch, reception hall, walk in under stairs store, 23'9" through living/dining room, refitted kitchen, upgraded utility room, three bedrooms (two with fitted wardrobes), tiled upcycled bathroom, large garage, recently block paved foregarden, sheltered rear garden. EPC: TBC SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £159,950



DUDLEY, Wrens Nest Road

EXCEPTIONALLY SPACIOUS WITH FOUR GENEROUS BEDROOMS! - Stylish, modern, gas centrally heated, double glazed, intermediate family home comprising; hall, cloakroom, store, kitchen, living/dining room. To the first floor; three bedrooms, bathroom and to the second floor a superb principal bedroom suite with built in mirrored wardrobes, walk in stone wardrobe & shower room en suite. Garden, parking. EPC: C SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £149,950



DUDLEY, Belvoir Close, Milking Bank

Conscientiously maintained and improved freehold gas centrally heated (combi boiler) and UPVC double glazed semi detached at head of cul-de-sac upon popular development with panoramic views from the rear garden. This includes entrance hallway, lounge, refitted breakfast kitchen, plus two bedrooms (one with wardrobe), upgraded bathroom with white suite, potential garage space, delightful landscape (designed for low maintenance) and secluded rear garden. EPC Rating D. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £145,000



SEDGLEY, 3, Etymore Road

Immediate walking distance of the Bull Ring: Gas centrally heated, double glazed two double bedroom home constructed to first quality specification comprising; hallway, cloakroom, kitchen (granite work surfaces & various integrated appliances), living/dining room, two bedrooms (one with wardrobe), bathroom, garden, parking to foregarden. EPC: B SEDGLEY

PRICE: £142,500

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13: Unlucky for some but a lucky choice for the bargain hunters



Homebuyers could save around £9,000 on the cost of a property – if they are willing to live at “unlucky” number 13 – research suggests.

Nearly one in three (30%) homeowners would be less likely to buy a house if it was at number 13, according to a survey from property website Zoopla.

But buyers who are not put off may be able to find a bargain, as analysis of Zoopla's website found homes with this number are typically £8,974 cheaper than the average UK property, which is valued at £300,012.

The research, which was released last week to coincide with Friday the 13th, found that more than two-fifths (43%) of people consider themselves to be superstitious.

Nearly a quarter (23%) of those surveyed said they would not exchange or complete on, or even move into, a property on Friday the 13th.

Nearly half (46%) of people have a lucky number, and a further one in five (19%) would be more likely to buy a property if it featured their favoured digits.

While seven was found to be the most popular lucky number, the research also found that many people believe the number 13 attracts good luck rather than bad.

Thirteen was identified as the next most popular lucky number in the survey, after seven.

Zoopla's analysis of property numbers on its website also found that number one tends to be the most expensive door number, with the first home on the street typically valued at £319,318.

Number 100 tends to be the next most expensive property, with an average value of £311,107, with number two ranked in third place, with a typical value of £308,468.

Lawrence Hall, a spokesman for Zoopla, said there could be opportunities for buyers to secure a bargain on a Friday the 13th – a date when some other buyers may be put off making decisions.

He continued: “Our research shows that properties at number 13 are around 3% cheaper than the average UK property, which could provide a significant saving on homes with high asking prices.”

More than 2,800 homeowners took part in Zoopla's survey.

Here are the top 10 most expensive house numbers, according to analysis of values on Zoopla's website, with the average property value:

1. One, £319,318	6. Four, £301,709
2. 100, £311,107	7. 93, £300,727
3. Two, £308,468	8. Five, £300,560
4. Three, £304,607	9. 55, £300,261
5. 70, £303,632	10. 79, £297,978

And here are the 10 most popular lucky numbers, according to the survey of homeowners by Zoopla:

1. Seven	6. One
2. 13	7. Five
3. Three	8. Nine
4. Eight	9. Six
5. Four	10. Two

Buy to let mortgage market returns to previous level

Following a shift to more remortgaging in the buy to let lending market, more landlords moved to purchase properties in the final quarter of 2016, the latest data shows.

After the Brexit vote in the summer and concerns about changes to stamp duty for additional homes the number of mortgages for new purchase fell in the third quarter of the year.

But the latest buy to let index from Mortgages for Business shows that while remortgaging continued to account for the bulk of activity, lending for purchase's market share returned to levels seen earlier in the year.

Transactions

The share of lending for purchases in the vanilla buy to let market, that is standard buy to let transactions, increased from 28% in the third quarter of 2016 to 38% in the fourth quarter.

Meanwhile, there was a more subtle shift in the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) lending market, with the share of purchases rising to 26%. While this is below the level seen in the second quarter, it brings this part of the market back in line with the level seen before the announcement of the changes to landlords' tax relief in 2015.

“It is encouraging to see that the share of lending for purchase in the buy to let mortgage market returned to normal in the fourth quarter of 2016,” said David Whittaker, chief executive officer of broker Mortgages for Business.

“Following a notable shift towards lending for remortgage in the third quarter, landlords showed they were once again willing to commit to new purchases.

“The outcome of the European Union referendum, and the subsequent



macro-economic uncertainty dampened purchase lending in the third quarter with many landlords initially opting for a cautious approach,” he explained.

“While changes to stamp duty on second properties and landlords' tax relief mean that landlords need to approach their investments intelligently, there are still excellent returns to be had in the market – especially compared to other asset classes,” he added.

The results of the index also show that the average loan to value (LTV) ratios across all products remained stable at 67% in the final quarter of 2016. Gross yields also remain unchanged.

The index also reveals that there was a significant uplift in the typical property value and loan size in the multi-unit block mortgage market. This is due to an increase in the number of mortgages being taken out on very high value multi-

unit properties. Over the fourth quarter some 30% of multi-unit applications involved properties worth more than £1,000,000.

“There is clearly an appetite among investors for more valuable multi-unit blocks, with the lending share of million-pound plus blocks from growing under a fifth in the third quarter to almost a third in the fourth quarter,” Whittaker pointed out.

Lending availability is set to increase

Mortgage availability is expected to increase during the first three months of 2017, according to a survey of banks and building societies.

The Bank of England's Credit Conditions Survey found availability for borrowers with deposits of less than 25% is also predicted to edge up in the coming months.

The survey, which asks lenders about current and future trends, is conducted every three months as part of the Bank's role in maintaining financial stability. The most recent survey was carried out between November 21 and December 9.

Pressure

The Bank also released a Credit Conditions Review which said some major lenders expect recent increases in swap rates, which lenders use to price their loans, may put an upward pressure on mortgage rates.

Those taking part in the Credit Conditions Survey said they expect profit margins on mortgages to be squeezed in the first three months of 2017.

Lenders also reported that the availability of non-mortgage credit to households increased slightly in the last three months of 2016, but was expected to decrease slightly in the coming three months.

Credit scoring criteria for credit cards were reported



to have tightened in the last three months of 2016, and demand for credit card and other non-mortgage lending was reported to have increased.

Lenders also reported that overall demand for corporate lending from small and medium-sized businesses decreased significantly in the last three months of 2016, but remained unchanged for larger

firms. Demand for lending from small businesses is expected to fall back in the first quarter of 2017.

Lenders reported that default rates on loans to small businesses had increased slightly for the first time since the third quarter of 2014.

Default rates on loans to medium businesses had also increased.



Bungalow has much sought-after address

WALL HEATH

£264,950

Delightfully situated and having a sought-after address, 46 Lynwood Avenue, Wall Heath, is well placed for local amenities in the village.

It is for sale through Taylors at £264,950.

This large traditional detached bungalow has a very generous and well-presented layout of accommodation including two excellent sized bedrooms. It has a central reception hall with a spiral staircase off to a n office/potential bedroom three with storage cupboards, a lounge with a dining area off with an electric fire and a feature fireplace, a dining area and a conservatory, a kitchen with an integrated 'Stoves' oven, a utility room with space for appliances and full wall and floor tiling, two bedrooms and a bathroom.

For further information, contact Taylors on 01384 401777 or visit www.taylors-estateagents.co.uk



A deceptively spacious and individually designed home

HALESOWEN

£269,950

<<<

Deceptively spacious, this individually designed detached family home in Carol Crescent, Halesowen lies in a most popular and convenient location.

It is for sale through Hicks Hadley at £269,950 with no chain.

Having an entrance hall, delightful lounge, dining room, fitted breakfast kitchen with appliances, s conservatory, a downstairs cloakroom, four bedrooms with the master having en suite and house bathroom.

The property has gas central heating, double glazing, a good sized blocked paved driveway and a rear garden with a good sized decked patio.

In more detail the lounge has a feature fireplace with a fitted gas fire and a bay window overlooking the rear garden.

Call 0121 585 6667 or visit www.hickshadley.com

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NEW



£359,950

101 TIPTON ROAD, SEDGLEY

- Impressive, traditional extended four bedroom detached residence
- Well proportioned & considerably improved enhanced accommodation
- Extended rear lounge with views over protected fields
- Set back from the road with ample parking for several cars.
- EPC RATING E



NEW



NO UPWARD CHAIN

2A QUEENS ROAD, SEDGLEY

O/A £209,950

- Modern detached bungalow backing onto greenbelt woodland
- Deceptively spacious two bedroom accommodation
- Added benefit of conservatory, utility room & en suite shower room
- Representing an excellent opportunity for a discerning purchaser
- EPC RATING D



REDUCED

68 LOUISE STREET, LOWER GORNAL

O/A £175,000

- Improved & enhanced extended detached house
- Well proportioned three bedroom accommodation
- Conveniently positioned close to Gornal Wood village centre
- Parking for two cars plus garage, private rear garden
- EPC RATING D

Small development of new homes

Comprising three terraced houses, two semi detached and a four bedroom detached house

Will be completed to a high standard throughout

Help to Buy available

EPC RATINGS TBC



NO UPWARD CHAIN

121 TIPTON ROAD, WOODSETTON

O/A £354,950

- Impressive detached house having substantial two storey rear extension
- Extended living room, extended breakfast kitchen, three bedrooms
- Enviable positioned overlooking open countryside and farm land
- Attractively landscaped front & rear gardens with ample off road parking
- EPC RATING D



NO UPWARD CHAIN

81 NEW STREET, GORNAL WOOD

O/A £179,950

- Individually designed and built traditional style detached house
- Well proportioned, extended and enlarged three bedroom accommodation
- Potential for further enhancement & upgrading to a discerning buyers own style
- Occupying a wide road frontage with ample off road parking
- EPC RATING E



NO UPWARD CHAIN

71 DIBBLE ROAD

£119,950



NO UPWARD CHAIN

43 FURLONGS ROAD

£130,000

- SELDLEY
- Semi detached house
- Well proportioned accommodation
- Three bedrooms
- Two reception rooms
- Ideal for first time buyer
- EPC RATING C



REDUCED

25 TUDOR VALE

£550PCM

- SELDLEY
- Semi detached house
- Three bedrooms
- Two reception rooms
- Upgrading works required
- EPC RATING E



TO LET

UPPER GORNAL

- End terraced house
- Two bedrooms
- Cul de sac location
- Modern accommodation
- Shared grounds
- EPC RATING C



NEW

SOLD WITHIN A WEEK

10 HIGH ARCAL ROAD

£164,950

- Extended semi detached house
- Three bedrooms
- Two reception rooms
- Extended kitchen
- EPC RATING D



NO UPWARD CHAIN

58 RUITON STREET

£139,950

- End terrace residence
- Two double bedrooms
- Extended accommodation
- Breakfast kitchen, dining conservatory
- EPC RATING C



TO LET

LOWER GORNAL

- First floor flat
- One bedroom
- Modern accommodation
- Shared grounds
- EPC RATING C

An impressive extended four-bed backing on to fields

WOODSETTON

£359,950 >>>

This impressive, traditional and extended four-bedroomed detached residence in Tipton Road, Woodsetton, Dudley lies well proportioned and considerably improved accommodation.

Back on to protected fields, it is for sale through Wakeman Estates at £359,950.

It has a porch, reception hall, cloakroom/WC, an extended lounge, breakfast kitchen, dining room, a landing, four bedrooms, a bathroom, gardens, a garage and parking.

The deceptive, well proportioned accommodation, incorporating a fabulous breakfast kitchen.

Contact Wakeman on 01384 459999 or visit www.wakeman-online.com



Large bungalow is on a corner plot

HALESOWEN

£325,000

The Drive in Halesowen, is a generously proportioned detached bungalow situated on a large corner plot approximately quarter of acre with gated driveway.

It is for sale through Hicks Hadley at £325,000. It has a fully fitted kitchen, a large utility, a guest WC, two reception rooms, three spacious bedrooms, a bathroom and gas central heating, double glazing where specified. The lower floor has a large garage and two work shops and there are large gardens, a driveway and garage.

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Elegant residence situated in highly regarded area

Elegant and imposing, this charming residence in Catholic Lane, Sedgley is for sale through Taylors at £420,000.

With spacious gas centrally heated double/triple glazed four-double bedroomed, this detached property on a wide plot lies in prestigious district with panoramic distant views.

Its accommodation briefly

SEDGLEY

£420,000

comprises a reception hall, fitted cloakroom, 24ft through lounge, a formal dining room, a kitchen, utility room, a gallery landing, a principle bedroom with a bathroom en suite, three further double bedrooms (two

with wardrobes), a bathroom, double garage, additional 10'3" side space and gardens rotated to the south and a block paved driveway.

A lot of interest is expected to be shown in this home.

To book that all important viewing please contact Taylors on 01902 880888 or visit www.taylors-estateagents.co.uk

Renault's first new car offers for 2017

Renault has announced a selection of offers that make owning a car from the French manufacturer even more of a tempting proposition.

With a strong focus on convenience and affordability, Renault UK has introduced brand-new two-year 0 per cent APR PCP Selections packages. Available on new Clio, Captur, all-new Mégane and all-new Mégane Sport Tourer, Kadjar, all-new Scénic and all-new Grand Scénic, these deals offer the lowest monthly payments of any of Groupe Renault UK's Selections PCP packages and, as with the brand's other PCP offers, come with the added benefit of no minimum customer deposit.

As an example, the ever-popular new Clio with its recently refreshed styling and enhanced interior and equipment can be driven from only £129 per month on a two-year 0 per cent APR PCP Selections package¹. The deal on the Play 1.2 16V 75 version also includes a manufacturer deposit contribution of £850 and a customer deposit of £3,588.

Additionally, Renault UK's popular three-year 3.99 per cent APR Selections PCP packages are more affordable than ever. The deposit contributions are now the same as those for similar deals over a four-year duration, with the additional manufacturer support working to lower the total amount payable and the cost of interest.

Available alongside a variety of 0 per cent APR HP offers, the new and revised Selections PCP packages ensure that drivers enjoy even greater choice when it comes to financing their new Renault.

Cash buyers also benefit from the limited time offers. Notably, there are sizeable



The all-new Scénic is included in the offer



Two year 0 per cent finance on the new Mégane

savings across the innovative, rear-engined, rear-wheel drive Renault Twingo range with prices starting from only £7,995 for the Expression SCe 70 – representing a saving of £1,500 on the normal list price up to savings of £2,410 on the Dynamique S TCe 90 Auto which is now available from £11,395.

Multiple cash offers are available for anyone considering joining the ever-increasing number of drivers choosing an electric vehicle with the multiple award-winning Renault

Zoe in Expression Nav guise available from £11,995 (inc PICG) – representing a £2,000 customer saving. With the longest range of any mainstream electric vehicle – up to 250 miles (NEDC Combined) or an estimated 186 miles in real world conditions – the new ZOE Dynamique R90 Z.E 40 is now available for £15,845 (inc PICG), representing a customer saving of £2,000.

Alternatively, the new Zoe Dynamique R90 Z.E 40 can be driven away available on a



Renault's Clio has recently been refreshed and the interior enhanced

five year 0 per cent APR HP package with nil customer deposit and a £2,500 manufacturer deposit contribution. In addition to all retail purchases, customers will receive a free 7kW Wall-Box home charger, making their ownership experience of the four-time winner of the What Car? 'Best Electric Car for up to £20,000' and their 2017 'Electric Car of the Year' even more convenient.

With the offers available on vehicles registered by the end of March, customers

will save further by avoiding the changes in Vehicle Excise Duty that are applicable from April 1, 2017. By ordering and registering their new Renault before this date they can potentially enjoy three-figure savings.

Customers will also benefit from the Renault 4+ warranty and Renault Assistance vehicle recovery scheme, which comes as standard with every Renault and provides the ultimate peace of mind for four years or 100,000 miles.



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www.greenhousvolkswagen.co.uk

New life breathed into latest Micra

By James Parker

Let's face it, the last Nissan Micra wasn't exactly a big hit in the UK market.

It was a bit too quirky compared with previous generations and what had been the first-car staple of so many young drivers became the reserve of the older generation.

Nissan has breathed a new lease of life into the latest Micra, though, bringing it in line with the rest of its product range and offering segment firsts on the safety and technology fronts. It's been redesigned from the ground up to offer far better driving performance, plus the combination of standard safety options, improved driving aids and tech developments.

It is also available with must-have extras such as Apple CarPlay integration and high-quality Bose headrest speakers.

When it comes to looks, the fifth-generation Micra has certainly improved and is likely to win favour with those looking for a stylish but practical alternative to the traditional cars on the market. It's been given that instantly recognisable Nissan chrome 'V' around the badge and an overall much sleeker look.

It's clear that the target market for Micra is younger drivers and Nissan is hoping to capture the attention of this audience with its new customisation options. There are three levels for this, covering the exterior and interior, meaning buyers have 125 options to choose from and ensure their car stands out.

Focus on interior quality has been drastically improved. Here the Micra really sets itself apart from rivals, with soft flowing lines across the dash, built with soft-touch materials.

The new Micra has a longer wheelbase



Looks, the drive and the economy

than ever, and that means more legroom for all occupants. This is another way that Nissan has challenged rivals, as it's moving away from a cramped supermini to a small hatchback. With five doors and a reasonable boot it would be appealing for any family with young children.

The doors open nice and wide too which makes this a great option for getting in and out of, especially if you're trying to get a child in the back. However, the door openings themselves aren't that big and you'll have to bend over quite considerably.

The Micra is kitted out with lane departure assistance, emergency braking, traffic sign recognition and blind spot warning, meaning you get a really comprehensive range of driving assistance for such a small car. This is standard on the top-spec Tekna but you'll have to pay extra for it if you opt for a lower grade.

The Nissan Micra is available with two engine options at launch – a 0.9-litre turbocharged petrol and a 1.5-litre diesel –



The new Nissan Micra is finally a great alternative to the staples of the small hatchback market

both producing 89bhp. From March, when the car goes on sale, there will be a 1.0-litre naturally aspirated engine, producing 74bhp, coming to the UK but details are limited. Currently, it's only available with a five-speed manual gearbox.

According to Nissan, the 0.9-litre petrol engine will achieve 64.2mpg and produce 99g/km of CO₂ with stop-start fitted. Its diesel

counterpart will do 88mpg while producing 85g/km of CO₂. It will achieve 0–60mph in 11.9 seconds with the petrol engine, continuing to 109mph, while the diesel will go marginally faster to 60mph in 11.7 seconds, reaching 111mph. The Nissan Micra is a pretty pokey little car to drive in both petrol and diesel guises, although you'll get marginally more out of the little turbo petrol.

The new Nissan Micra is finally a great alternative to the staples of the small hatchback market. It's got the looks, the drive and the economy to become a serious rival worth considering. Take into account the infotainment options available and it makes an extremely strong argument for itself to those not particularly concerned about an inspiring driving experience.

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New Kia Stinger GT aimed at former Saab customers

By Antony Martyn

Kia has revealed its most powerful sports saloon car ever – the Stinger GT – a car it believes will offer former Saab buyers the chance to be different again.

The five-seat fastback sports saloon – unveiled at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit – will arrive in the UK with a twin turbocharged 3.3-litre V6 engine, producing 365bhp.

Kia says the car will crack 60mph in around five seconds, have a top speed of 167mph and feature an eight speed gearbox and rear-wheel drive when it goes on sale here in October.

But the manufacturer says it isn't targeting the obvious rivals from BMW, Audi or Mercedes – instead it believes the Stinger GT will be the sort of car former Saab buyers might buy.

A spokesman said: "This is a car for buyers who want something different – the anti-German brigade who used to buy Saabs. Doctors, accountants, architects, those people who want individual styling, a larger car and value for money."

Saab stopped selling cars when it went bankrupt in 2011. It was bought by a Chinese-Swedish investment group in 2012 which promised to restart production, but that hasn't happened. It traditionally sold in low volumes to buyers looking for an alternative to the mainstream offerings.



The car has four oval exhaust pipes

Kia doesn't expect to sell huge volumes of the Stinger GT in the UK either – the spokesman said 1,500-2,000 a year would be a huge success. "America will be the largest market for this car," added the spokesman.

The Stinger GT is a direct evolution of the concept car that first debuted at the Frankfurt Motor Show in 2011, penned by Kia chief design officer Peter Schreyer.

Featuring four oval exhaust pipes, wheel arch gills, an integrated rear diffuser, LED headlamps and Kia's signature 'tiger nose', the Stinger GT certainly has those sporty looks. And with former BMW man Albert Biermann behind the chassis, which has been honed on the Nurburgring, performance is at its core.

He said: "I think, for the Kia brand, the Stinger is like a special event because nobody expects such a car, not just the way it looks but also the way it drives. It's a wholly different animal."

A 2.0-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine will also be available in the Stinger GT, producing 255bhp. However, this is not coming to the UK – well, not just yet anyway.

"The Stinger GT is a car for performance saloon enthusiasts who might have bought one from the likes of Ford or Vauxhall in the past but were put off by the fact they were produced by manufacturers selling 350,000 cars a year," added a spokesman. "This is will be imposing, more individual, luxurious and exclusive."



It is a direct evolution of a concept car



The Stinger features Kia's signature 'tiger nose'

Kia Picanto

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It's time for a closer look at the Picanto



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• 55 Penn Road, Wolverhampton WV2 4WW

brindleykia.co.uk

T. 0121 514 0508

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The Power to Surprise

Fuel consumption in mpg (l/100km) for the Kia Picanto '1 Air' 65ps 1.0 5dr: Urban 48.7 (5.8), Extra Urban 74.3 (3.8), Combined 62.8 (4.5), CO₂ 105g/km. MPG figures are official EU test figures for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. Finance subject to status, terms and conditions apply. Offer available on purchase of a new Picanto between 01.01.2017 – 31.03.2017. Picture for illustration purposes only. 7 year / 100,000 mile manufacturer's warranty. For full terms and exclusions visit www.kia.co.uk. W. Brindley (Garages) Limited trading as Brindley Kia Wolverhampton are a credit broker (not a lender) for the purposes of this financial promotion and can introduce you to a limited number of carefully selected finance providers and may receive a commission from them for the introduction.

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1
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2
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what's on

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Bank's Stadium, Walsall FC
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07893 975701 All hard standing

3
Home & Services

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AS NEW leather 2 seater tan/brown settee. In excellent condition. Cost £800, bargain, sell £100. Call Sarah 07583 674268.

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Chesterfield 3 seater and 2 seater Oxford Red sofas cost £2000. Need a Quick Sale will accept £895.00 can get delivered call Glenn

£895 o.n.o.

07398 185593

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MEMORY FOAM mattress, double, still wrapped, easy care, cost £250, sell £160 o.n.o. 07521 859322.

OLD CHARM BOOKCASE six shelves, solid wood, £300. Telephone 07866 319501.

TOP QUALITY Green leather three and two seater settees, solid oak frame, nice conditon, £200 o.n.o. 07887 891754.

LEATHER SETTEE 2 seater coffee colour, excellent condition, £100 o.n.o.

Flame effect dimplex electric fire, new, £90 o.n.o. Fridge freezer, Zanussi, good working order, £50 o.n.o.

07804 039333.

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HAVE YOU CHECKED your advertising today? We would respectfully remind advertisers that it is their responsibility to inform the publishers of any mistakes or inaccuracies on the first day of publication.

KENSINGTON GAS fire, in black, hardly used. £60. 01902 784051.

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Flame effect dimplex electric fire, new, £90 o.n.o. Fridge freezer, Zanussi, good working order, £50 o.n.o.

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Pre '47 silver coins all war medals etc

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01922 495066 or 07971 783206

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any live steam. Also Die Cast,
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01384 636219 / 07891 713547
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ALL COLLECTABLES from wars
wanted by collector, medals,
helmets, swords, etc. Genuine
prices paid. 07511 500337.

READERS ARE ADVISED to carefully consider all of their options before agreeing to the sale of any of their items.

SPECTRUM GAMES Wanted, plus
any Spectrum 128k-2 computer
wanted also any old Crash magazines
wanted. 01902 892916.

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LEATHER SETTEE

2 seater coffee colour, excellent

condition, £100 o.n.o.

Flame effect dimplex electric

fire, new, £90 o.n.o.

Fridge freezer, Zanussi, good

working order, £50 o.n.o.

07804 039333.

items wanted

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All Beswick • Doulton • Royal Worcester • Royal Doulton •

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• Diamonds and Gold Coins • Clocks • Paintings

• ALL SILVER • All Oriental Items

Pre '47 silver coins all war medals etc

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12 mths guarantee. 07850 355552.

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ALL DRAIN AND SEWER

Blockages cleared fast.

Call Fast Clean: 01902 736424.

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A BARGAIN PRICED house re-wire, fuseboards, etc. Grahams, Electrical.

01902 842739, 07783 471949.

ALL HOME ELECTRICS NAPIT registered. Fully insured. For a free

quote call 07583 320318.

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CALL M & B DECORATORS

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Free Quote

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BUILDING Plans: Prepared/submitted. K. Bradley 01902 372487 07792 165767. www.plans4u.co.uk

plastering

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rendering & small building work undertaken. 40 years experience. For a free quote

Call Roy
07887 495726
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Full heating systems £2200
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Longer water pipes, radiators, request, fits and surrounds also available.

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4

Pets & Animals

equestrian corner

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guns & dogs

NOTICE TO ADVERTISERS
Advertisers must ensure that they meet all necessary legal requirements for owning and using guns.

vets

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RGT Wolverhampton
@RGTWolves

NOTICE TO READERS
Please be aware that when purchasing a puppy there are some simple guidelines you can follow to ensure that you are not purchasing from a Puppy Farmer:

1. Try to ensure you visit the puppy whilst it is still with its Mother.

2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.

3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree. Whilst Midland News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

SALLY Affectionate 12 year old cat looking for a new home, after owner passed away before Christmas, suit older persons. 07847 360784.

CHOP

Handsome long legged Staffie boy, 3 years old, white with tan patches.

Chop is a very friendly dog and is good with most other dogs.

A responsible home is needed for him where someone would be at home most of the day, as he does suffer from separation anxiety.

Please call 01384 252158.

www.dogsamaritans.org.uk

KIND HOMES WANTED

PEGGY - 1 year old Border Collie.

JOEY - 18 month old Tri coloured Collie.

KAI - 18 month Collie, tri coloured.

PHANTOM - 3 year old mostly white Border Collie.

BOBBY - 14 year old young, very handsome Collie.

SCAMPI - 1 year old lovely little Jack Russell.

01588 67106.

www.dogsamaritans.org.uk

TWO FISH TANKS Tropical, W14in, L31in, 2ft high, on a two door cupboard, one is a jewel & fluvial, £70.00 each. 01384 401574.

5

Business & Farming

business opportunities

READERS are recommended to take appropriate professional advice before entering any obligations.

business directory

accountants

ACCOUNTANCY SERVICES for Small Business. Competitive Rates. Call 01902 882600

commercial premises

UNITS AND OFFICE SPACE to let in Oldbury, West Bromwich and Walsall. Easy Terms. Ashmore Properties 0121 520 5318.

6

Property

accommodation to let

A 2 BED FLAT to let Fallings Park, 1 Bed Willenhall. Ensuite Rooms Chapel Ash DSS 01902 686605

NOTICE TO READERS
Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments.

A FURNISHED studio flat for single mature person. £365pcm, inc all bills. W-ton 07957 595840. No DSS.

NOTICE TO READERS It is an offence under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1993, for an Agency to charge a fee simply for the registration of your requirements and/or supplying particulars of premises to let.

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Walsall & Cannock area: Call 01922 432049

Wolverhampton: Call 01902 489901

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We can help you make a fresh start

With solutions to suit ... you can clear your debts and make a fresh start

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7

Jobs

drivers

TRADE PLATE DRIVERS required to deliver vehicles throughout the UK. Must be over 25 and like early starts. Call 07932 355584.

NIGHT SHIFT STEEL FABRICATOR/PLATE READER required to fabricate structural steelwork from drawings, must have experience. Full time, night shift positions with good rates of pay and conditions. Please contact Gary on 01384 258400.

NIGHT SHIFT STEEL WELDER Experienced steel welders required to work on structural steelwork company in Dudley. Full time night shift position with good rates of pay. Please call Gary on 01384 258400.

full time - general

employment wanted

MALE AGED 45 seeks employment. Experienced in sales, admin etc. own transport. Contact 07891 433942.

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8

Motoring

cars over £1500

LOOK

FORD FIESTA ZETEC

2012, 23,000 miles, 3 door, only used as second car, showroom condition, alloys etc, as new.

£3,100.

07833 076209.

KIA SEDONA LE 3.0 MPV DIESEL

04/54, two owners, roof rails, 60,000 miles, Ish, cam belt replaced, MoT September 2017, RCL, EW, factory dvd, tow bar, privacy windows, £1,900.

07518 327271 Kidderminster.

4X4

LANDROVER DISCOVERY TD5 ES PREMIUM

Auto 2002, metallic blue, 1 previous owner, low miles, FSH, MoT, RR Alloys with AT tyres, full electric leather, every extra fitted, genuine tidy vehicle.

£6,650 ono

07971 284856 or

01746 861841.

LOOK

MINI COUPE

1.6, 04 plate.

lady owner.

FSH, MoT.

Mint condition.

£2000.

07516 660557

IMMACULATE

NISSAN MICRA

3 DOOR

2010 Reg.

60,000 miles.

Good MoT.

Immaculate condition.

One owner.

Red.

£2,495.

07486 578439.

blue, radio, CD, Bluetooth, full service history, 2008 reg, 1.4 engine. MoT March 2017, alloy wheels, 105,000 miles, all electric, Air con, ABS,

Very good condition.

£2,000 ono.

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that the Business Advertisements (Disclosure) Order of 1977 requires that advertisements must clearly differentiate between Private and Trade.

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YOUR PERFECT JOB!

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- JOB ALERTS
- CV MATCHING

47

Dudley Chronicle

Thursday, January 19, 2017

1ST TO SEE WILL BUY
VAUXHALL CORSA LIFE 1.0
59 plate, red, 3-dr, 51,000 genuine miles, long MoT, very nice condition, 1st to see will buy, absolute bargain.

£2,795 ono
Part exchange may be considered.
07985 588532.

CARS UNDER £1500**IDEAL FIRST CAR**

FORD KA

05 reg, 11 months MoT, s/h, c/l, 73,000 miles, very good condition.

Ideal first car.
£550.
07976 293994.**EXCELLENT CONDITION**

JAGUAR X-TYPE

52 plate, 2.0, immaculate condition, 59,000 miles, Jaguar FSH from new, metallic grey, one owner, MoT'd, two keys.

£1,495
07867 685569.**BARGAIN**

JAGUAR X-TYPE

Grey.
9 months MoT.
65,000 miles.
£895 ono.

Telephone 07973 282911 or 01902 688615.

MUST BE SEEN

MINI ONE

2004, silver,
part service history,
MoT,
excellent condition.
£950. o.n.o.
07976 645763.**SUPER BARGAIN**

MITSUBISHI LANCER

08 reg.
Automatic, MoT June 2017,
70,000 miles, air con.
Excellent condition.
£895.
Telephone 0121 291 3103.**IMMACULATE**

PEUGEOT 207

1.6HDi S, 2010, black.
long MoT.
cheap tax and to run.
£1,495.
07486 570018.

SUZUKI IGNIS
55 reg, automatic, 1 owner from new, 10 months MoT, drives like new, good condition, any trial
£895.
07540 474922.

MUST BE SEEN

VAUXHALL CORSA

1.4 BREEZE
S Reg, 5 door, Hatchback, E/W, C/L, PAS, Silver, MoT Nov 17.
Radio cassette player, 64,000 miles. Nice tidy car.
£595 ono.
01562 752815.**1ST TO SEE WILL BUY**

VAUXHALL CORSA DESIGN

2005 reg, silver.
51,000 miles, long MoT,
Bargain £895.
07913 981460.**commercial vehicles**RENAULT MASTER LWB VAN
2005, low mileage, new gear box.
£2,800.VAUXHALL ASTRA Sportive van, silver, 04 reg, alloy wheels, excellent condition. Bargain £895.
07913 981460.**classic cars**WANTED, CLASSIC Cars. Private cash buyer. Instant cash settlement. Any age. Any condition.
01630 652993 or 07773 462797.**driving tuition**

Drive All Seasons
Lessons Starting FROM
L 5 Lessons £50 10 Lessons £89 L
Manual & Automatic
Free Unlimited Theory
07517 845477
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AMAZING OFFER 5 lessons £40, 10 lessons £80, £20 an hour thereafter. Call now 07958 051263.

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OUR ADVERTISERS are reminded that it is an offence under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 to buy scrap cars/meta for cash.

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Scrap & MOT Vehicles Best Prices Paid ELV Registered Spares Always Available
0121 557 0800 or 0121 557 0400. Oldbury Area.**vehicles wanted**

CROWN MOTORS guarantee best price for your unwanted cars/vans. 07903 549849, buyer will call.

spares & accessories**spares/part**BATTERIES FROM £34.95
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Hyundai i10, Toyota Yaris
Clio & Micras

Ring for quotes on others!

30 yrs experience

ALL AREAS COVERED

Call Bob
01384 251328
07972 169554

anytime

9 Local Information**public & legal notices****LICENSING ACT 2003**

Application has been made by Barzan Shekzade, to the Licensing Authority of Dudley MBC, for a new premises licence, in respect of: European Food Express, 202, High Street, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 1QO.

The application includes the following terms:
1. To enable the sale of Alcohol between Monday - Sunday 08.00 - 22.00, for consumption off the premises.

Full details of the application may be viewed at: Directorate of Corporate Resources, Law and Governance, Licensing Services, Unit 1, Narrowboat Way, Hurst Business Park, Brierley Hill DY5 1UF during normal office hours, Monday to Friday.

Council's website = www.dudley.gov.uk any representations by responsible authorities or other persons regarding the application, must be made in writing to the above Licensing Authority and they must be received no later than 14th February 2017.

It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in conjunction with an application and the maximum fine for which a person is liable on summary conviction for the offence is £5000.

FEMALE 55

Looking for Male companion only, for nights in and around Wolverhampton. Must have own car. Genuine replies only.

Box Number P20675, Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

SINGLE DADAged 45
Loving and caring.
Seeks genuine lady for evenings/ days out etc.

Single Moms welcome.

Box Number P20680, Express and Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

HAVE YOU CHECKED your advertisement today? We would respectfully remind advertisers that it is the responsibility of the advertiser to check publishers of any mistakes or inaccuracies on the first day of publication.

CREMATION PLOT Bushbury Crematorium, £800.
07807 172907.

EVER WANTED TO BE ON THE STAGE?
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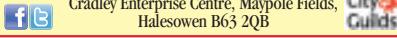
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KATIE 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent 40+. Must be discreet, married or single. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3003 Box 419673

MARIE, very attractive curvy widow, longing for romance seeking country-looking male with old-fashioned guy for lots of TLC. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425595

JANE, young, 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. Tel: No: 0906 515 3011 Box: 409715

SUE 38yrs enjoys most things, meals in/out, easygoing, broadminded, passionate, slightly feisty, looking for adult fun; call me if you're interested in spicing things up. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425587

SOPHIA young 40s, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. Tel: 0906 515 3019 Box: 413399

ROZ, 43, tactile, sensual, loves to dress up, and wear heels, seeks genuine caring male. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425597

EMILY, mature well educated lady, blonde and smart and broadminded seeks gent any age for no strings fun. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3023 Box 421375

KATHY 37, gorgeous mixed race single female, 5ft 8ins, slim, sensual, just looking for kind, trustworthy guy any age, looks or race. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box: 425589

HI Gents, I'm Kelly, a down to earth lady, 35yrs, shapely brunette, seeking someone with GSOH, looks unimportant, any age. ACA, I promise! Tel: 0906 515 3027 Box 423035

JACKIE, 37, attractive lady who is lots of fun seeks like-minded gent for nights in, days out and much more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424491

NAUGHTY curvy 46y old lady, outgoing and bubbly with a saucy side and lots of banter, WLTM chap 30+. If you are married better. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3015 Box 424543

SUE, 60 years, calling all gents who seek a mature solvent stylish lady. I can wine and dine you, you will have a nice time, call or text me. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424781

SARAH, 39yrs, married, seeking chap for no strings intimate times. Special friendship, mutual respect. Give me a call. Tel: 0906 515 3031 Box 408291

JAN, 41, fed up of sitting at home every week, end watching TV alone. Feel the same and looking for love? Please contact me. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425497

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STACY 28y old gorgeous brunette with buxom figure, intelligent and sensual, WLTM genuine male to get to know for fun dates and more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425457

MELINDA, 52yrs, attractive and broad minded seeking chap any age for some fun. Text only Mailbox: 4131945

SARAH, 41, dizzy blonde, blue eyes, loves to dance seeks affectionate, chunky, fun male to make her laugh and brighten up her day. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425413

JOSIE, sexy black lady, 52yrs seeks adult times with concerning gent, any age, discreet clean, womanly figure. Text only Mailbox: 425253

SANDRA, smart, sophisticated lady young looking 60s, genuine and kind seeks gent with GSOH, looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424671

HELEN, mid 50s naughty lady seeks some fun times with gent any age. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424493

ANNABELLE, sophisticated 28yrs hoping to meet older gent for adult fun, discreet, sincere, genuine advertiser. Text only Mailbox: 4157105

VIKKI 32y old active female, confident, fit, loves night outs, looking for similar assertive male. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425453

LINDA, 48yrs attractive blonde seeks gent for laughter, wiring dining. Age unimportant. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425337

EILEEN mid 60s seeks gent 50s-60s for friendship, possibly much more. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425341

MARY, professional mature lady, loves life, very sociable and fun, seeks gent for good conversation and happy times. All calls texts answered. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425057

KAREN, 47, an attractive blue-eyed redhead, curvy size 16, likes films, football, pubs, eating, seeking likeminded male for nights in/out hopefully more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425057

TERRI, attractive 35y old female with a great body, looking for no strings attached evening meets. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424377

MARY, passionate honest slim blue-eyed blonde, 39yrs, likes nights in/out, looking for affectionate male, any age to spend adult fun times. Interested? call me. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425009

DONNA, 42, bright bubbly blue eyed blonde looking for someone to enjoy life and love to the full. Call me. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424873

LINDA, 48yrs attractive blonde seeks gent for laughter, wiring dining. Age unimportant. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424873

RETIRER happy, caring, attractive female, likes gardening, travel, animals, comedy, seeks tall, funny, kind chap. Shropshire. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 411459

SUZANNA, 45, lonely beautiful classy lady looking for happy decent reliable very sexy man for lots of TLC and good times. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424847

SARAH, young looking curly 41y old female, bored with everyday routines, WLTM up for some fun discreet and extremely broadminded younger male. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424827

DEBBIE, 50, petite blonde looking for some fun and adventure with similar fun loving male. Looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424779

CALL or text me, I'm Claire, single, 41yrs loves life to the full, hoping you will contact me if you want a genuine fun time. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424779

SARAH, mature feminine lady, kind caring but still has a sensual side, hope to meet like minded, confident, non smoking gent with GSOH, looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424777

JANE 40's, blonde blue-eyed petite build, WLTM, understanding discreet tall, caring man for daytime meets. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424769

ANDREA, 43, slim with long dark hair, blue eyes, loves to dance seeks romantic man to share intimate moments in or out. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424721

CAROL, mid 50y old, young at heart, attractive, outgoing, seeks similar sensual male for nice times together. Any age/looks. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425395

LADY, looking for a mature, caring, loving gentleman, 55-70, to enjoy the finer things of life and to be my best friend. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425030

JEAN, mature lady, genuine with many hobbies, slim, blonde and attractive. WLTM interesting gent with GSOH, must be cheerful, looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424675

TRACY, 41, outgoing sun worshiper, OHAC, employed, looking for a Prince Charming to enjoy romantic holidays and good times together. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425257

KATHERINE, 28, tall, slim, dark blue eyed female with many interests. OHAC, WLTM interesting male for dates, and more. Single dad welcome. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425287

CHRISTINE, 40, attractive slim sporty blonde seeks fit well built male. Call me's see what the future brings. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425061

ANGELA, 36, tall, slim, blonde Brunette seeks man, any age, any area, for discrete daytime fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418117

THAI female 39, very beautiful, petite and self sufficient, loves cooking and home making, looking for caring, kind man/single dad. Please call me. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425191

CHRISTIANE, 40, attractive slim sporty blonde seeks fit well built male. Call me's see what the future brings. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425061

AMANDA, 36, tall, slim, blonde Brunette seeks man, any age, any area, for discrete daytime fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424495

LOVING lady, romantic and tactile seeks like-minded gent for special times, lets make each other feel special. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425325

ATTRACTIVE Caribbean lady 59yrs, very jolly and fun seeking gent any age who loves to love good times. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425233

ANDREA, 43, slim with long dark hair, blue eyes, loves to dance seeks romantic man to share intimate moments in or out. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424651

CAROL, mid 50y old, young at heart, attractive, outgoing, seeks similar sensual male for nice times together. Any age/looks. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424783

THELMA, 59, slim, petite and Afro Caribbean, GSOH, trustworthy, honest and very caring, leaves you my details if that sounds good to you! Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425195

PATRICIA, 50s, solvent female, tactile, fun likes to travel, seeks tall, easygoing male to make all the good things in life with. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424553

MATRIMONIAL female, attractive, sensual by nature, OHAC, bored with own company, looking to make a life a little more exciting with likeminded man. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424591

CHRISTIAN male, 51, seeking Christian female, 35-45 for friendship, possibly more. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 423747

MATRIMONIAL male, 70s, tall, retired, recovering alcoholic, WLTM someone's understanding, maybe in the same situation for friendship and mutual support. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 423026

YOUNG looking 63 year old male, GSOH, friendly, considerate, attractive, looking for a naughty female, any age/status, for adult fun and friendship. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424687

PIERS, 56yrs, romantic gentle WLTM lady to wine, dine, spoil. I'm kind, caring, generous. Single mums welcome. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424682

MALCOLM, 60 something gent, own hair and teeth, GSOH, genuine and kind WLTM sincere lady to wine and dine. Please call. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425335

PROFESSIONAL gent, 44yrs, tall, attractive and genuine. Seeks genuine feminine lady for genuine romance. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425333

PIERS, 56yrs, romantic gentle WLTM lady to wine, dine, spoil. I'm kind, caring, generous. Single mums welcome. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425331

GENUINE gentleman, family minded, kind, generous seeks lady 55-75 for wine, dining and sex. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 5321154

WIDOWER, 60s, honest, trustworthy, GSOH, likes country walks, eats, drinks, in restaurants etc. WLTM a partner to share interests. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425239

JONNY, 24yrs, gay curious, not sure what to do, older men pls call me and help me understand. Text only Mailbox: 4086857

PAUL, 50, Birmingham area, looking to meet up for fun times, maybe relationship with a guy. 25-70, can accommodate. Tel: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 425487

MATRIMONIAL bi/xd looking for a mature gay or bi male in the B'ham area. Cannot accommodate. ACA. Text only. Mailbox: 4758692

DAVE, 54, 5ft 10, medium build, easy going, looking for an attractive, loving and caring female, 45-65, for friendship and relationship. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 423073

YOUNG 70 widower, fit, lonely, 5ft 11ins. 11st, likes drives, walks, DIY, meals out, gardening, smoker, looking for a spouse to live with. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424973

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CARING male, 55, N/S, medium build, likes meals out, music, cinema, sports, driving, seeks female, 40-60 for friendship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 239148

HONEST male, 60s, N/S, GSOH, car owner, seeks female, 55-70 for friendship, maybe more. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416817

MALE, 63, widower, Irish, GSOH, tall, independent, seeks special lady. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418899

MALE 65, GSOH, seeks female for friendship and companionship. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418389

CHRISTIAN male 51, seeking Christian female, 35-45 for friendship, possibly more. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 423747

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50y old male, likes country walks, pub lunches, seeks lady for friendship, maybe more. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424685

MALE 50, 5 feet 7, tall, medium build, easy going, warm hearted, loving, 45, 6ft, medium build, young at heart, GSOH, seeks female, 50-60 for friendship, maybe more. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424681

MARX 48, slim, fit, GSOH, looking for loyal partner for LTR. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424679

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Graham Taylor on becoming Wolves boss with chairman Jonathan Hayward



Graham Taylor is awarded the OBE in 2002



Taylor following his appointment as England manager



Taylor signs Paul McGrath and Kent Nielsen at Villa

Intelligent, visionary and breath of fresh air

IT WAS a hot day in early May, 1990, and Villa fans were bouncing. Literally bouncing.

The final game of the season had ended in a thrilling 3-3 draw at Everton and Villa had finished second in the old First Division behind Liverpool.

The away end at Goodison Park was shaking. It was the first time as a teenage fan I had felt a stand move beneath my feet. I was 18 and giddy with heat, excitement and a few pints at a pub stop just off the M6.

Thousands of Villa fans had made the journey to Merseyside and it was the worst kept secret in football that this was Graham Taylor's goodbye to the claret and blue faithful.

We all knew he would be taking over from Bobby Robson after the World Cup in Italy.

This is the man who had built Watford and taken them all the way from the Fourth Division to the First in five years and capped it with an FA Cup final at Wembley.

Plunged

Villa, meanwhile, had gone the other way. League champions in 1981, European champions in 1982, they had plunged into the Second Division within five years of that glorious night in Rotterdam.

In the darkest of times of his chairmanship, Doug Ellis made his shrewdest ever move. He recruited Taylor. The new manager was then just 42 and wasted no time in describing the club as 'a shambles' as he walked through the doors of Villa Park.

He was the breath of fresh air all Villa fans had craved. His first season saw Villa promoted back at the first attempt. He brought in David Platt and Alan McNally, while midfielder Andy Gray came in from Crystal Palace as his famous namesake went out of the door to neighbours Albion.

SPORTING MEMORIES

Russell Youll pays tribute

Taylor later recounted how that farewell moved him to tears. It remains still my greatest memory as a football fan.

Villa finished in second, going up on goal difference ahead of Middlesbrough. The following season, Villa escaped relegation by a single point. But what a season followed.

Taylor signed Paul McGrath from Manchester United and Villa cut a swathe through the First Division, with a classy edge provided by a reborn Gordon Cowans and a rampant Platt. In the end, Villa ended the season nine points behind champions Liverpool but it was a closer race than that.

But when we boarded that bus to Goodison on May 5, 1990, we knew we were saying goodbye to Taylor as Villa boss, although we didn't know then he would return one day for a second spell. When the final whistle blew the players thanked the fans, Taylor applauded the supporters and left the pitch.

But when the Goodison gates opened but not a single Villa fan left. As 'Graham Taylor's claret and blue army' echoed around a stadium devoid of Everton fans, it was clear the Villans would not leave until Taylor returned one final time.

It must have been some 20 minutes after the final whistle when he emerged. I will never forget his hands clasped together in triumph and thanks. Tay-

lor recounted in an interview some years later how that farewell moved him to tears. It remains still my greatest memory as a football fan. For that Graham, I thank you.

Taylor's time at Wolves was fairly brief – he lasted little more than 18 months before he was hounded out by angry supporters and an impatient board. But it was certainly memorable.

It was a huge coup for Wolves to land Taylor in March 1994. Having been vilified and castigated for his role as England boss, Taylor saw it as a chance to resurrect his career – as well as rejuvenate a sleeping giant, backed by Sir Jack Hayward's millions.

Wolves just fell short of the play-offs and then, armed with a warchest of £4.5m, Taylor brought in Tony Daley, Steve Froggatt, Neil Embleton, Don Goodman and John De Wolf.

Four of those five players suffered serious injuries in 1994/95 but Taylor oversaw a truly thrilling campaign. Wolves scored 77 goals, the highest in the league and 10 more than champions Middlesbrough, but conceded 61 (rock-bottom Notts County let in 66).

Injuries, and three 3-3 draws in six games, meant Wolves had to settle for the play-offs again – and Bolton's John McGinlay crushed their dreams.

The next season started badly and Taylor was forced to resign amid supporter protests.

Despite his regrets at not being able to complete the job, he would always speak fondly of Wolves. And those fans (and Jonathan Hayward) who forced him out would concede he departed too soon, especially when watching Taylor take Watford to the top flight in 1999.

Taylor's legacy was laying the foundations for the club's youth scheme and a training ground of their own. He demanded they move to Compton. He also later convinced his Watford protégé Kenny Jackett to take the Wolves job. Another wise decision from a deeply intelligent football visionary.

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Farewell to a gentleman:
Graham Taylor tributes

Page 51



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Cushion may be enough to avoid drop

IT was not so much New Year, new you, but rather same old, same old for athletes from Dudley Kingswinford Running Club at the weekend.

It was back to running around muddy fields for the blue hoops as the cross country season continued. After the threat of snow and ice runners were contemplating getting the long spikes out but they would have been better off with wellies after persistent rain throughout the preceding 24 hours.

The men continued their battle for Division 2 survival in the Birmingham League, travelling the short distance to Lilleshall for their fixture with the race being run over a figure of eight course with a few ups and downs and slippery muddy sections over a distance just shy of six miles.

Overall, the club finished 14th of 16, but importantly were almost 200 points better off than their rivals for what would appear to be the final relegation place, Amazing Feet of Kidderminster.

With one fixture remaining DK remain in 14th, one place above the drop but with a nice cushion which could be enough to maintain their Second Division status.

The ladies were even closer to home, travelling to Wolverhampton for their fixture in the West Midlands League. Despite missing some athletes and cutting it fine and almost missing the start they performed well.

Twenty four hours later Roger Bedford took part in the Four Villages Half Marathon around the Cheshire countryside starting in the village of Helsby and travelling through the three other villages of Dunham on the Hill, Mouldsworth and Manley. Using the race as a training run as part of his marathon build up he finished in 841st place in 1:50.21.

Boxing clever as improvements to club are completed

IMPROVEMENT works at Dudley's Priory Park Boxing Club have finished, thanks to more than £19,000 worth of funding from Cory Environmental Trust in Britain.

The club was in need of an upgrade to its original building in order to bring it up to modern standards. The plan was to create a functional training room that could be used by club members as well as the wider community.

Priory Park approached CETB for £19,547 to purchase new equipment to deliver a functional training programme for a range of people from a variety of backgrounds. The equipment can be used by those with disabilities, as well as able-bodied community members.

Boxing club chairman Paul Gough said: "We are delighted with the improvements that have been made to the club, and the new equipment we've had installed will be beneficial to individuals from all walks of life."

With a long waiting list of young adults and children, the additional equipment and facilities will enable the club to take on more members.



Cup heroes send out league message

Skelmersdale 0 Stourbridge 4

SUPERB Stourbridge blew away bottom-of-the-table Skelmersdale to improve their prospects in the EVO-STIK League Premier Division.

The Glassboys put aside their FA Cup heroics with a stunning first-half show in Lancashire.

Gary Hackett's men cut loose after 22 minutes when full-back Kristian Green broke from the halfway line and let fly with a spectacular 25-yard shot, which struck the underside of the bar on its way into the net.

It was 2-0 on the half-hour-mark as Skelmersdale struggled to clear a Chris Lait corner,

Football

enabling first Jordan Archer and then Jack Dugan to set up the chance for the league's leading marksman Luke Benbow to smash home his 16th of the season.

Benbow controlled the ball on his chest with his back to goal before swivelling to fire home on the turn.

Stourbridge added a third four minutes later when Tom Tonks released Matt Dodd down the right flank. He in turn delivered a low cross which saw outstretched Skelmersdale defender Dylan

Smith divert the ball into his own net beyond the reach of goalkeeper Chris Cheetham.

It was 4-0 five minutes later when Dodd again raced free down the right and crossed for Lait to head home.

Stourbridge could have netted further goals, especially in the 62nd minute when highly-prized central defender Dan Scar, who spent the week training with Premier League Albion, headed against the crossbar from another Lait corner.

Two minutes later, Skelmersdale's misery was complete when Dylan Smith was sent off after picking up two yellow cards for bringing down the pacy Dodd.

Strikers put end to Yeltz barren run

Halesowen Town 2 Whitby Town 0

A GOAL in each half from strikers Tristian Dunkley and George Bowerman boosted Halesowen to a much-needed first win in 11 games.

The Yeltz proved to be full value for their half-time lead against their higher placed opponents and visiting goalkeeper Shane Bland kept out two efforts from Dunkley midway through the first half. But Bland couldn't prevent dangerous Dunkley scoring his first Halesowen goal in the 37th minute following a superb turn on the edge of the area.

Whitby's best first-half effort came in the 43rd minute when Dale Hopson struck a half-volley inches past the post.

After the interval, the Seasiders pinned the Yeltz back for long spells, but lacked the end quality to turn possession into goals. Dan Platt made a great save to keep the scores level from Hopson's shot after an hour and, as the pressure continued, Callum Martin blasted wide before curling another effort over the bar.

Whitby substitute Matthew Tymon then fired two late efforts wide.

Bowerman doubled Halesowen's lead in the final minute when he robbed defender Luke Bytheway to slot past Bland.

Halesowen manager John Hill expressed his relief at the long-awaited victory.

"We worked really hard against a team near the top and I was delighted with our clean sheet, as well as both our strikers hitting goals. We do need to add to the squad, but the win helps confidence for the next game."

'Yozza' misses out on final place again

TIPTON'S Jamie Hughes bowed out of the BDO World Championship at the semi-final stage for the second year running, losing to best pal and eventual champion Glen Durrant.

Hughes lost 6-1 at Lakeside on Saturday. Durrant went on to secure his first BDO world title, beating Dutchman Danny Noppert 7-3.

In the semi-final, the Black Country thrower was 4-0 down before he registered his first set.

The 30-year-old has now failed to beat Durrant in his last nine attempts at competitive darts, one of only three victories coming at the 2014 Antwerp Open.

Hughes broke Durrant in the very first leg, punishing his miss at tops for 116 with double five for 80. However, Durrant broke straight back and clinched the opener in a decider before going on to rattle off the first four sets.

★★★

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Thursday, January 19, 2017



DK's Luke Greenwood spots a gap in the Bournville defence – and goes for it

Death of snooker stalwart, aged 78

THE local snooker scene is mourning the death of Derrick Stevens, aged 78.

For almost 40 years Derrick played for Cradley Heath Conservative Club until its closure in 1984 and then for On Cue Snooker Club.

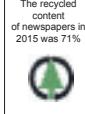
He was part of a team that won a succession of champion-

ships in the Stourbridge and Halesowen Leagues, and lifted the West Midlands Inter-Town cup for Cradley Heath on six occasions between 1967 and 1984.

Derrick was a member of the Cradley Heath Cons/On Cue SC teams which won the top division of the Stourbridge League in 24 out of 29 seasons until

1994 and he became the oldest player, at 60, to become Premier Division individual champion in 1993. He also won the first two over-45 individual championships, leading to the competition being handicapped.

Derrick also represented his clubs at the Stourbridge League meetings.



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Window firm goes from strength to strength

Commercial feature

Family run windows specialists DW Windows is celebrating a second decade in business in the Black Country this year.

The business has grown steadily since being founded by former firefighter Dave Walters in 2006. It is now run from a head office in Coseley and has two showrooms and employs more than 30 people, including six directly employed fitting teams. DW Windows has moved on way beyond just double glazed windows - of which it offers many different styles and colour profiles, including aluminium - over the first ten years in business, and also offers conservatories, doors, solid tiled conservatory roofs and much more. Company Secretary and Dave's wife, Claire, said that her husband had 25 years' experience in the windows industry and had fitted them for other companies, but realised that he could provide a better service if doing it himself. "We have gone from being one man with a van operating from our home in Wolverhampton, to employing more than 30 people across two sites," she explained.

DW opened its first showroom in Brick Street, Sedgley, in 2010 and last July opened a much bigger 7,300 sq ft showroom and a new head office in Meadow Lane, Coseley, creating a further 15 new jobs. A former warehouse was renovated to create one of the largest windows and doors showrooms in the Midlands, along with offices and a warehouse for DW Windows' stock and supplies.

At Coseley, eight conservatories/orangeries, two porches, 27 various doors,



Managing Director Dave Walters advises a customer



Just a few examples of DW Windows' extensive window range

three sliding patios, two bi-fold doors, sliding sash windows and various other window products are on display and at Sedgley the window, door and conservatory centre also has more specialist products on show such as Residence 9 windows, aluminium, flush sash and conservatory tiled roof options.

DW Windows specialises in Linar and Profile 22 upvc windows and doors and Apeer and Eurocell composite doors.

Claire Walters, who joined her husband in the business in 2013 said that it had grown from a turnover of £180,000 in its first full year to £2.3 million last year. "We have achieved this in spite of going through the height of the economic downturn and uncertainty for the construction industry.

In November 2016 the company was rewarded by becoming finalists in the Black Country Chamber of Commerce awards for customer service and outstanding achievements. Our plan now is to open more showrooms in the West Midlands in the next few years as we continue to grow," she said. The core area of business for DW Windows is the Black Country and surrounding areas of Staffordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire and Birmingham. It has also had people come from as far as Yorkshire and Wales who had heard about the standard of the company's work.

Most of DW's business comes from recommendations and the remainder from people calling in to its showrooms and

through its website - www.dwwindows.co.uk - and many people choose to book an appointment from its product advisers at their homes. They can be booked on Freephone 0800 999 0909.

Once a customer has decided on exactly what they want and signed a contract, one of the company's four directly employed surveyors will attend to do a final measure up.

A date is then given for installation and the surveyor will draw up the job, process it and book the fitters in.

For most work, the aim is to complete the work within four weeks of an order, but for bigger jobs like conservatories, dates are given for the completion of each stage.

The team of installers is trained in house to industry standards, with the assistance of an external health and safety consultant. It has CHAS (Construction Health and Safety Scheme) accreditation.

DW Windows, which last year carried out more than 900 installations, always strives to ensure the standards of installations are the highest and there is a strong focus on professionalism, workmanship, customer service and after sales advice. DW customers are insured from the moment they sign the contract and they also get a ten year guarantee on frames and a five year one on glass.

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